Diaspora, Gender and Social Work in the Palestinian refugee camp, Shatila

LAURA MOILANEN

School of Social Sciences and Humanities

Social work Master´s Thesis

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Supervisors: Satu Ranta-Tyrkkö & Aino Ritala-Koskinen

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School of Social Sciences and Humanities

LAURA MOILANEN: Diaspora, Gender and Social Work in the Palestinian Refugee Camp, Shatila.

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Social Work

Supervisors: Satu Ranta-Tyrkkö and Aino Ritala-Koskinen

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This Master´s Thesis is a critical ethnography about social work by the Palestinian non-governmental organization, Beit Atfal Assumoud in the Palestinian refugee camp, Shatila in Beirut, Lebanon. The aim of this study is to understand social work in the Shatila refugee camp from its specific cultural, social, political and historical standpoint. The theoretical orientation of my thesis is, hence, grounded on constructionist and postmodern paradigms. In refugee studies commonly known concept of diaspora is used as an analytical tool to examine social work in Shatila through Palestinian postcolonial and cultural identity construction. In addition, I consider social work in Shatila as a gendered practice, especially produced by women´s experiences. My research questions are: What is Beit Atfal Assumoud´s social work like and in which ways is social work responding to the protracted humanitarian distress of families living in the camp? In which way are gendered meanings and diasporic consciousness shaping social work practice? The interdisciplinary approach of this study seeks to conceptualize social work and to depict unified as well as culturally particular social work perspectives. In Finland, social work research conducted from the anthropological departure points is rare and has often been concentrated around Western notions of social work practice, values and theory.

My empiric data consists of fieldnotes from three-month-long fieldwork period in the Shatila refugee camp during which I observed and participated in organizational activities, visited families and followed the social workers´ every day practice. Another important data source of my study is interviews with the social workers and the mothers of my informant families. The methodological framework of critical reading has guided me through choices in the research process and analyzing my data. In particular, critical ethnography shows in this study as a reflexive approach towards my research position, interpretation work as well as my fieldwork experience. The purpose of my analysis is also to look beyond taken for granted assumptions, use cultural and political conceptualization as well as advocate against social injustices which are all objectives consistent with values in social work practice and research. My data is analyzed using thematic analysis.

According to my results, social work in Shatila appears to connect with some of the universal social work perspectives and values of human rights, social change and family well-being. Also, like detected in Finnish practice, social work in Shatila is increasingly influenced by management and professionalism demands too. The cultural and political determinants that shape social work in Shatila resonate in social workers ideological commitment for the Palestinian cause as well as their experience-based expertise. Furthermore, my contention is that the cultural distinctiveness of social work by BAS is its nature as identity politics aiming at strengthening diasporic identity based on national memories, meaning of homeland and cultural heritage as well as raising international awareness and solidarity for the Palestinian distress in Lebanon. My thesis points out also

that the refugee experience shape gender relations, and how gender identities and roles are constructed within social work practice in the receiving country.

The results encourage paying attention to the relationship between ideology and social work in the Finnish social work research. This might be particularly important at times of changing social, economic, cultural and political forces in the globalizing and postmodern world. My study challenges Finnish social work to acknowledge the significance of ideology, experience- based expertise and identity resources in refugee work as well as generally in social work discourses.

KEY WORDS: Palestinian refugees, diaspora, gender, women, social work, Lebanon, Shatila, critical ethnography.

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Sosiaalityö

Ohjaajat: Satu Ranta-Tyrkkö ja Aino Ritala-Koskinen

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Pro gradu –tutkielmani on kriittinen etnografia Beit Atfal Assumoud nimisen palestiinalaisen kansalaisjärjestön sosiaalityöstä Shatilan palestiinalaispakolaisleirillä Beirutissa, Libanonissa. Tutkielman tavoitteena on konstruktivistiseen ja postmoderniin tieteen perinteeseen tukeutuen ymmärtää Shatilan sosiaalityötä sen kulttuurisista, sosiaalisista, poliittisista sekä historiallisista lähtökohdista katsottuna. Pakolaistutkimuksessa tunnetun diasporan käsitteen avulla tarkastelen Shatilan sosiaalityötä palestiinalaisen postkolonialistisen ja kulttuurisen identiteetin kautta. Tulkitsen Shatilan sosiaalityötä myös sukupuolittuneena käytäntönä ja erityisesti naiskokemuksen tuottamana. Tutkimuskysymykseni ovat: Millaista on paikallinen sosiaalityö Shatilan palestiinalaispakolaisleirillä ja miten se vastaa pakolaisperheiden hätään pitkittyneessä humanitäärisessä kriisissä? Miten sukupuolittuneet merkitykset sekä diasporinen tietoisuus muokkaavat Shatilan sosiaalityön käytäntöä? Näin ollen tutkielmani poikkitieteellinen näkökulma pyrkii myös ottamaan osaa sosiaalityön käsitteellistämiseen ja siihen, mitä yhteistä ja erilaista sosiaalityössä on eri kulttuurisissa konteksteissa. Antropologisen tutkimuksen keinoin sosiaalityötä on tutkittu hyvin vähän Suomessa ja usein sosiaalityön tutkimus on rakentunut vain länsimaisten käsitysten vaaraan sosiaalityön käytännöistä, arvoista ja teoriasta.

Tutkielmani aineisto koostuu kolmen kuukauden mittaisen kenttätyön aikana kerätyistä havaintomuistiinpanoista järjestön toiminnasta, perhevierailuista sekä sosiaalityöntekijöiden jokapäiväisestä työstä Shatilan leirillä. Toinen merkittävä aineistolähteeni on sosiaalityöntekijöiden sekä perheiden äitien nauhoitetut haastattelut. Tutkielmani kriittisyys näkyy metodologisessa viitekehyksessä, joka on ohjannut valintojani tutkimuksen edetessä sekä aineistoni analyysissä. Kriittinen etnografia korostuu analyysissäni refleksiivisyytenä omaan tutkijan positiooni, tulkintaani ja kenttätyökokemustani vasten. Analyysin tavoitteena on myös katsoa itsestään selvien olettamusten taakse, tulkita aineistoa kulttuuristen ja poliittisten käsitteiden varjossa sekä ottaa kantaa sosiaalisiin epäoikeudenmukaisuuksiin, mikä itsessään on sosiaalityön arvojen mukaista, niin käytännön työssä kuin myös sosiaalityön tutkimuksessa. Aineistoni analyysitapa on teemoittelu.

Shatilan sosiaalityö näyttäytyy tutkielmani keskeisten tuloksien mukaan perustuvan niin sosiaalityön universaaleille periaatteille ja arvoille ihmisoikeuksista, sosiaalisesta muutoksesta ja perheiden hyvinvoinnista kuin myös yhä enemmän sosiaalityössä ilmenevien julkishallinnollisten ja professionaalisuuden vaatimusten periaatteille. Kuitenkin Shatilan

sosiaalityötä tehdään sen omista poliittisista ja kulttuurisista lähtökohdista, mikä ensisijaisesti nousee esille sosiaalityöntekijöiden kokemustiedon, ideologisten vakaumusten kautta sekä heidän työstään palestiinalaisten oikeuksien puolesta. Analyysini mukaan Shatilan sosiaalityön erityisyys on sen identiteettipolitiikka, joka pohjautuu diasporisen identiteetin – kansallisten muistojen, kotimaan merkityksen ja kulttuurisen perimän – vahvistamiselle kuin myös kansainvälisen tietoisuuden ja solidaarisuuden edistämiseksi palestiinalaispakolaisten hädästä Libanonissa. Tutkielmani muistuttaa myös siitä, että pakolaiskokemus on aina sukupuolittunut ja että myös sosiaalityön käytännössä rakennetaan sukupuolta sen tavoitteilla, odotuksilla ja toiminnalla.

Shatilassa tehtävä sosiaalityö kannustaa ideologian merkityksen tutkimiseen suomalaisessa sosiaalityössä, mikä vaikuttaisi olevan erityisen merkityksellistä sosiaalisten, taloudellisten, poliittisten sekä kulttuuristen muutosten aikana postmodernissa ja globaalissa maailmassa. Tutkielmani haastaa myös suomalaista sosiaalityötä huomioimaan ideologian, kokemustiedon ja identiteettiresurssien tärkeyden pakolaistyössä kuin myös laajemmin sosiaalityön diskursseissa.

AVAINSANAT: palestiinalaispakolaiset, diaspora, sukupuoli, naiset, sosiaalityö, Libanon, Shatila, kriittinen etnografia.

1 Introduction: Social work responses to the protracted humanitarian crises of the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon

> *"I ask you to tell others because you stayed with us for over three months. I don't speak. I want you to reflect the image you saw to others. What you see, is the image that I want others to see." (Palestinian Social Worker in Shatila camp, interviews.)*

This Master´s Thesis is a critical ethnography about social work in the Palestinian refugee camp Shatila, in the city of Beirut, Lebanon. From November 2013 to February 2014, I completed a social work field practice as part of my master´s studies in social work in the Shatila refugee camp. My field practice was performed under the supervision of local social workers in the humanitarian non-governmental organization, Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS; literally "The House of Enduring Children"), that delivers social, health, cultural and educational services for Palestinian families living in the refugee camps across Lebanon. BAS is one of the well-known NGOs in Lebanon whose objective is to raise awareness of the Palestinian refugee issue and contribute to the development process of the Palestinian community in Lebanon. Social workers of BAS work in the camps at the grass root level with families in order to achieve social change and advocate for the Palestinian cause. Because of my personal research interests in refugee studies, I decided to integrate the internship experience into my Master´s thesis research process and therefore, simultaneously, collected ethnographic data with the interest in examining the ways in which social work by BAS can respond to the protracted refugee situation and the distress of the Palestinian refugee families living in the Shatila refugee camp.

In recent decades, an increasing amount of people have been forced to flee due to the wars, political violence and ethnic conflicts. The massive displacement of people challenges international community to react on the long-term effects of conflict. The vast majority of the world´s refugee population lives in prolonged exile without efficient service delivery, advocacy, and humanitarian aid nor civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights which places the issue of protracted refugee situations at the center of international political and social arena. (UNHCR 2006, 106 -108.) After 67 years of exile, the Palestinian refugee issue still remains unresolved regardless of its global awareness. Palestinian diaspora in the Arab world has experienced exile and displacement compounded by exclusionary and

discriminatory policies of the Arab host countries. In particular, Lebanon is known for its institutionalized discrimination of the Palestinian refugees in education, employment, housing and association (Gerges 2000, 258). The Palestinian refugee situation in Lebanon seems desperate, as the notion of permanent resettlement is rejected by the consensus of Lebanese population and the Palestinian authority has downplayed the refugee question in its political agenda. As a result, most of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon are dependent on humanitarian aid, family remittances and informal labor. Humanitarian non-governmental organizations, including BAS, have been central actors in providing refugee services and advocating local and international response to address Palestinian displacement.

On arriving in Beirut and entering the Shatila refugee camp for the first time, I had one particular presumption in my mind: the everyday practice of social work relating to the living circumstances in the camp, as well as its ideology and justifications, must derive from the injustices experienced by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. I knew that my own set of ideas about social work would be extended and perhaps even contested as I did not only enter a culturally unfamiliar location but also was going to be surrounded by culturally specific ideas and explanations of social work. All social work ultimately touch upon concerns relating to social justice and human rights as it seeks more just social, economic and political power relations among people. It is committed to social change towards justice, inclusion, diversity and participation, yet, shaped by specific cultural contexts of its participants. (Quinn 2003, 83; Payne 2008, 2.) Following this social work premise, the aim of this study is to understand social work in Shatila from its own cultural and political stand point and, furthermore, perhaps entrench the notions of professionalism and superiority of Western social work and welfare practice by grasping indigenous social work knowledge in the Palestinian refugee context, as well as engender general discussion on the question, what is social work with refugees like or what is the distinctiveness of social work in responding refugee distress.

In this study, social work is a sight of research and a theoretical orientation intersecting with anthropological approach on cultural meanings, concepts and belief systems as my method of inquiry is ethnography (compare Ranta-Tyrkkö 2010). Therefore in order to understand social work by BAS as culturally specific phenomena in a particular cultural, political and historical situation, I have incorporated diaspora concept as a theoretical tool to interpret cultural practices in social work. Furthermore, my thesis is grounded on postmodernism and constructivism as well as postcolonial and critical reading on social work. During my field

work, I came to realize that not only was I examining social work by BAS in its own cultural context, I was surrounded by all women, thus, dealing with gendered meanings, ideas and explanations. My initial interest was never to focus precisely on gender analysis, yet it was inevitable and interesting consequence after interacting with female informants and following women-centered social work by BAS. Most of the time, I was specifically examining women´s experiences, interpretations and meanings in the field. Furthermore, social work in the Shatila camp like social work in general, is everyday dealing with gendered institutions such as families which raises gender perspective, from my view point, essential in understanding social work by BAS. As such, I am attempting to look beyond the boundaries of social work discipline and combine different cultural and political discussions with a purpose of indebt and comprehensive interpretation of social work. In addition to interdisciplinary approach, the ethnographic research process has required reflexive touch on analysis and also, careful exploration of my own position as well as research ideology and morals while approaching such a politically influenced theme and sight of research.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the Palestinian refugee issue in Lebanon from the historical, political, legal framework and further present some of the main socio-economic predicaments of the Palestinian refugee population. In addition, I will briefly introduce Beit Atfal Assumoud, Shatila center and its social workers as background information for my analysis. Thereafter, I move on to the theoretical orientation of this study and explore the concept of diaspora in more detail in a relation to social work discourses as well as elaborate on ´gender´ against my theoretical discussion. The following chapter presents critical approach to ethnography as the method of my inquiry, the analysis and, furthermore, brings forth my personal reflections and ethical considerations on the research process as a whole. After the methodology chapter, I arrive to the results that are constructed around the main conceptual nexus of diaspora, gender and social work. To conclude my theses, I review my results in a light of ´universalism´ and ´difference´ in social work practice and discuss the possible contributions to social work conceptualization as well as refugee work in Finland.

2 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: Facts, figures and history

2.1. The politics of refuge, displacement and rights discourse

The Palestinian refugees are the indigenous Arab inhabitants who were displaced or fled from their homes as a result of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948. The war broke out after decades of national dispute between Jews and Arabs over the legitimate right of the land: Israel or Palestine. Small Jewish community had lived together peacefully with the Palestinian indigenous population in the land of historical Palestine until the development of Zionism - Jewish national movement. Intensifying Jewish immigration to Palestine from the late 19th century onward and the British support for the Zionist project led to the tension between the Arabs and Jews. During the 19th century, Palestine among the other Arab countries was under the Ottoman Empire. Arab nationalism and liberation movement in the region developed simultaneously with the birth of Zionism in Europe. However, the British rule succeeded in Palestine after the Turks and was favoring Jewish immigration, their land acquisition and construction of Israeli state. The Great Britain stated its official support for Zionism with the Balfour Declaration in 1917. This was an important political accomplishment for Zionism and had a major impact on the fate of Palestinians. (Juusola 2005, 32-33, 43-45; Manna 2013, 89.)

The objective of Zionism was to establish a Jewish state with the majority population of Jews. The movement was inspired by the European nationalism and it claimed self-determination by recounting experiences of oppression and historical stories and Biblical promises of the Jewish repatriation to *Zion* (Jerusalem). (Juusola 2005, 24; Maoz 2013, 13.) Jewish people had been persecuted and discriminated for centuries in Europe and Russia. It is worthwhile to note that Zionism would have not probably developed into a mass movement without ethnic antisemitism in Western Europe and progroms in Russia. After the second Word War, the experience of holocaust again reinforced the sense of Jewish victim-hood and became an important justification for the Israeli state and the colonization of the Palestinians. In the beginning of the movement, Zionists did not believe that the Palestinian population would oppose their objectives. Zionism was influenced by the colonial notions of European superiority over indigenous populations. Hence, Palestinian Arabs were constructed as primitive and backward. According to Zionists, creation of the modern Jewish

state in Palestine would bring wealth and civilization for the indigenous Arab population. (Juusola 2005, 26, 40-42, 57.) The perceptions changed soon, though, when the Arabs began to demand for their civil rights, claimed their legitimate right to the land of Palestine and, moreover, objected both: the colonizers and Zionism. By the end of World War I, Palestinians began to fully realize the potential threat of the Zionist project and several Arab rebellions followed to put an end to Jewish immigration and their colonial aims. (Juusola 2005, 46, 51-52; Manna 2013, 90.)

The national dispute and tension between Arabs and Jews proved impossible for the British to balance with. Subsequently, after the World War II, the British mandate rule in Palestine was falling apart. As a solution to the Arab-Jew conflict, the UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of 1948 recommended the partition of British Mandate Palestine into two states. Palestinians did not, however, approve the two-state plan but saw it as unjust. Regardless of the Jewish immigration, construction of state infrastructure and their increasing land possession, Palestinians believed that, as the indigenous majority, they would have the right to take control over the country after the British rule and live together with the Jewish minority. On the eve of the 1948 war, Arabs of Palestine were still the two third of the population and possessed 90 % of the land. (Juusola 2005, 58-61, Manna 2013, 90-91.) However, the Zionist project had by then a strong international support and the Zionists had strengthen their unity, military power and state infrastructure whilst the Arabs were dispersed with conflicting interests and lacking of strong leadership. The Arab countries in the region sympathized Palestinians but did not unite to fight for the Palestinian cause. All the Arab parties of the war had their own political interests in this heated geopolitical arena. (Juusola 2005, 65-68.) As a result of the 1948 war, defeated Arabs were left with some territories of the West Bank and a control over the Gaza Strip. However, no Arab Palestinian state was created, whereas, self-declared independent Israeli state kept all the areas that the UN General Assembly Resolution of 1948 had recommended in its two-state plan. In addition, Israel gained control over majority of the suggested Palestinian areas. The war led to the expulsion or flight of around 750 000 – 900 000 Palestinian people from which majority were Arabs. The Palestinian refugees are mainly dispersed in refugee camps in Gaza Strip, West Bank, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. (Juusola 2005, 71-78; UNRWA; Rempel 2006.)

According to the Palestinian narratives, 1948 events are described as *Nakba* (catastrophe) during which people had fled in fear of Israeli military forces, hoping to return back home

when the war was over. Israelis, on the contrary, celebrate the events as independence triumph against the Arab hostilities. (Daodi & Barakat 2013.) However, the question of Palestinian refugees still remains as a burden unresolved for Israel. According to the Israeli interpretation of the events, Palestinians left their homes specifically because of the Arab orders that were aimed at moving Palestinians out of the way of Arab military forces. Thus, Israel has claimed unaccountability for the issue. (Juusola 2005, 73-78; Daodi & Barakat 2013.) It is proven, however, that Israel had deliberate actions to threaten and expel Palestinians from their homes. In the course of the war, Israeli tragedy became more violent and involved features of ethnic cleansing. Israeli forces also purposely destroyed Palestinian houses and property. Thus, it is indisputable that Palestinian refugees did not flee voluntary, but as a result of fear, ethnic cleansing, forcible eviction and massacres. Yet, tactics of Arab forces and their economic and political interests in the war impacted on the birth of the refugee problem and later on, further wave of refugees has fled the West Bank and Gaza Strip because of the ongoing hostilities. (Juusola 2005, 73-78.) Despite the contesting narratives and blame shifting, the Palestinian refugee problem is a major political question in the region hampering the peace process.

Despite international recognition of the gravity of the Palestinian refugee problem, the international community has not conducted a solution to the issue. Israel considers host country integration and resettlement as the primary durable solutions for the Palestinian refugees (Rempel 2006). The Jewish state tries to prevent the enlargement of the Arab minority as return would threaten the Zionist objective of majority population. (Juusola 2005, 78.) Palestinians on the one hand have insisted on the right of return to their homes and compensation for lost land, often referring, especially, to the U.N. Assembly´s 1948 Resolutions 194 (III) which called for permitting refugees to return as legal support. However, many of the U.N. Resolutions are not legally binding and the international community lacks consensus on international legal provisions regarding Palestinian refugees and right of return. (E.g. Van Houvelingen 2013.) Furthermore, the host countries, on their part, are reluctant to resettle Palestinian refugees into their societies. Palestinians are transferred into either stateless residents or second class citizens. This all is facilitated through the lack of comprehensive definition of a status of a Palestinian refugee which would determine the criteria for assistance, protection, rights and obligations. (Rempel 2006; Suleiman 2006.)

The most often invoked definition of a Palestinian refugee comes from the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) which was established in 1949 to provide relief and assistance to the refugees. UNRWA defines Palestine refugees as "*Persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict.*" UNRWA was set up two years prior to the 1951 Refugee convention relating to the status of refugees and establishment of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, which defines clearly, unlike UNRWA, the terms of the status – with its rights and obligations. However, most of the Palestinian refugees fall under the exclusion clause of the 1951 refugee law that states that the convention does not apply to persons who are at present receiving protection or assistance from other UN agencies (Article 1 D (1)) and, as such, are barred from the international legal system and physical protection provided by UNHCR to refugees under its mandate. UNRWA, as a relief agency, does not define legal status of a refugee and does not have the authority to provide protection for their human rights. (Rempel 2006; Ibrahim 2008; Suleiman 2008, 9-10.) Without sufficient legal protection, Palestinian refugees are subjects of host countries´ protection and policies which, most often, are discriminatory in nature. The disagreement over the causes and accountability, the lack of international political will, the legal confusion and the massive scope of the problem prevent to find a viable solution. As a consequence, majority of the Palestinian refugees still remain homeless without civil rights in the world system of nation states

2.2 Discrimination against the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: Determinants of poverty

According to UNRWA, there are around 455 000 Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon, most of who are living in one of the country´s 12 camps. UNRWA further reports that Lebanon has the worst living conditions compared to the other Palestinian camps in the Arab countries and people live in deep poverty. Lebanese government has systematically discriminated and marginalized Palestinian community and left the people solely dependent on scare resources and services of UNRWA and different local and international NGOs. (Suleiman 2006; Ibrahim 2008; Schenker 2012.) It is important to note that the first generation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon or in other Arab countries did not want to integrate into their host societies: politics of return was the main focus. Lebanon, on its part, was worried about the socio-economic pressure that came along with the refugees

and held Israel responsible for the refugee problem and further, finding a solution for it. Thus, resettlement was not a priority policy for either party. The first Palestinian influx was mainly low-skilled, uneducated peasant population which did not have a place in the Lebanese society. As a consequence, Palestinian refugees were dehumanized and excluded in refugee camps around the country. (Manna 2013, 94-96.) Palestinian refugees emphasize 1948 events as the main reason for their unfortunate fate and current suffering but, as David Schenker (2012, 69) explains, much of their suffering is attributable to Lebanese policies and legal framework. Lebanese political system runs based on a religious secretarian division between Christians and Muslims. Any shift in power balance could potentially result in new domestic conflict. Integration of Palestinian Sunni Muslims into Lebanese society would disturb the prevailing power balance. (Suleiman 2006; Manna 2013; Schenker 2012.)

Lebanon is still recovering from its long and violent civil war of 1975-1990 in which Palestinians played a key role. As a consequence, Palestinians are accused for many ills of the Lebanese society and are often looked at with suspicion (Ibrahim 2008, 84). Between the late 1960s and 1982, Palestinian nationalism was reborn and the refugee camps of Lebanon were the heart of the Palestinian national movement and the primary base of Palestinian-armed struggle against Israel (Khailili 2008). Palestinian´s political organization PLO moved its military operation to Lebanon and was controlling and governing all the Palestinian refugee camps. Palestinian´s exclusion in the Lebanese society made PLO´s independent operation in the camps possible. The political and military objective of PLO was to liberate Palestine and enable the return of Palestinian refugees. Meanwhile, Lebanon was facing major domestic political tensions and confrontations. These were relating to the secretarian system of power sharing among the three leading religious communities - the Maronite, the Sunnis and the Shi´a. The right wing Maronite Christians had economic-political domination and was increasingly confirming its position. The left-side opposition included Muslims and the Druz who, on the one hand, tried to reinforce their influence. The Palestinian political factions took advantage of the Lebanese domestic tension and aligned with the Muslims in order to enhance their political and military positions. This combination of domestic and external factors led to the outbreak of the civil war. Israel invaded Lebanon 1982 in an alliance with the Maronite and tried to suppress Palestinian national movement and their military actions. In a process, Palestinian refugee camps were frequently targeted and finally, the Palestinian political organizations were forced to depart. (Juusola 2005, 181-183, 190-194.) The Lebanese civil war did not change the domestic political system: the essence of it

still remains unchanged. The secretarian power sharing balance is still fragile and Palestinians are seen as "problematic other" in the Lebanese society.

The Shatila refugee camp, in particular, was attacked numerous of times and suffered heavily during the Lebanese civil war. Refugees´ property was damaged and many of them were displaced. Shatila camp was a central site of the Palestinian liberation struggle between the late 1960s and 1982 when PLO was controlling the camp. It was severely destroyed when the Israeli forces invaded Lebanon in 1982 in order to banish PLO out of Lebanon resulting in a massacre of approximately 3000 men, women and children. The events are called as the Sabra and Shatila massacre when the Lebanese Phalangist militia men, under the watch and control of the Israeli Defense Force, attacked Sabra and Shatila during a 48 hour period between 16 September and 18 September in 1982. (Khalidi 2001; Shahid 2002; ref. in Sukarieh & Tannock 2012.) Even though the massacre was condemned as an act of genocide and one of the infamous war crimes in history, the survivors of the massacre and the families of the victims never received justice as Israelis defense minister, Ariel Sharon, was never held for personal responsibility for the crime. Between the years 1986 and 1990 Shatila camp was besieged by the Amal´s Shia militia known as the Lebanese war of the camps and the sub-conflict of the Lebanese civil war (Khalidi 2001 ref. in Sukarieh & Tannock 2012). Again, Palestinian refugees in Shatila were experiencing violence, trauma of lost, displacement and destruction of property. Shatila camp is, thus, historically significant place in the Palestinian national memory. The community has gone through destruction and loss of the kind than the others have not.

From the Lebanese legal framework perspective, Jaber Suleiman (2005) describes Palestinian refugees as a special category of foreigners, regardless of their prolonged residence in the country. Palestinians are prohibited from working in some seventy job categories as certain professions are limited only for Lebanese citizens. As Suleiman (2005, 14) further observes: "*Lebanese legislation denies Palestinian refugees basic rights granted to its nationals, while at the same time not guaranteeing them the refugee rights accepted and recognized in relevant international instruments*." Even though, majority of the Palestinian refugees do not receive legal protection under the mandate of the 1951 refugee law, the fundamental refugee rights stated in the 1951 convention such as right to work, to education, to housing and to non-discrimination are also protected in the International Human Rights law and in most of the international legal instruments that constitute that law, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the International

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), which are both ratified by Lebanon. Never the less, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon lack separate legal statuses that grant them the basic human rights according to the international norms. (Suleiman 2006, 9.) Because of their inadequate legal status, Palestinians have limited access to work, public health care and education, social services and property ownership.

The Taif Accord in 1989 ended the Lebanese civil war aiming at extending Lebanese authority and sovereignty in the country from the foreign presence (Saseen 1990). With regards to Palestinian refugees, the accord banned all the Palestinian militia groups and outlined the principles of the discriminatory legislation in order to prevent assimilation (Knudsen 2007, 5). Most of the Palestinian refugees are not demanding for Lebanese citizenship, as they above all want to maintain their national identity and legitimize their right to return. However, they are seeking greater civil and social rights in the Lebanese context in order to self-sustain their community and enhance their well-being. (Suleiman 2006, 15-18; Schenker 2012, 69-70.)

A lot of research has been conducted on Palestinian refugees' predicaments, showing that Lebanon has the highest percentage of Palestinians living in extreme poverty. According to UNRWA`s and AUB´s socioeconomic survey of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (2010, 24), The main demographic characteristics of the refugee population in Lebanon are as follows: 56 % of refugees are female, the average age is 30, 3, and 50 % of the population is below 25 years of age. The average household size is 4, 5 members. (Chaaban & al. 2010, 24.) Two out of three Palestinian refugees subsists on less than 6$ a day and the high poverty rates are directly connected to the alarmingly high unemployment rate. (Anera 2012.) 56% of refugees are jobless and only 37% of the working age population is employed. Due to the discrimination in the labor market, Palestinians are restricted all but medial jobs in the construction, electrical, sanitation, agricultural and textile fields. The nature of jobs is often casual, low status and low paid. The survey also shows that 21 % of employed refugees work in seasonal work, and only 7% of those who are employed have a contract. (Chaaban & al. 2010, 7) Also, unemployment among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon has a strong gender dimension. Most of the occupational sectors are dominated by men and only around 13% of women are employed compared to 65 % of men. Certain sectors of employment are feminized such as health care and education. Women can also find work in `"other services" as servants, cooks or nannies. (Chaaban & al. 2010, 11.)

Education has a central role in eradicating poverty among Palestinian refugees. Poverty rate is significantly higher when the head of the household has low education.(Chaaban & al. 2010,36.) According to the socioeconomic survey (ibid. 2010, 36), poverty rate drops from 73% to 60, 5% when the household head has an above primary education. Palestinian children cannot access the public school system in Lebanon. UNRWA offers education services for the Palestinians but fails to meet the need of an increasingly young population - half of the population is younger than 25 year- old. UNRWA runs currently 74 schools and two vocational education centers across Lebanon. Thus, non-profit organizations are in a major role in offering especially pre-school education and vocational training. (Anera 2012, 8.) Around half of the Palestinian teenagers drop out of school before completing their education and 8 % of those between 7 and 15 years old were not at school at all in the year 2010; only 13 % of the Palestinian refugees older than 18 have baccalaureate or higher degree. (Chaaban & al. 2010, 2.) In the Lebanese schools system, students must take Brevet, the Lebanese government exam, on completion of middle school in order to enter secondary level. Many of the students struggle to achieve the required level of the exam. Some children feel pressure to find work to help support their families and thus, leave school to work for example in temporary jobs in construction or agriculture. On the other hand, some of the teenagers feel lack of motivation and desperate over their future professional prospects because of the discrimination in the labor market, even if their finances were secured. (Ibid. 2010, 7.) A third of the Palestinian refugee population is estimated to have chronic illnesses and 4% a functional disability. Common chronic illnesses are for instance hypertension, asthma, cancer and diabetes. Regarding mental health, 21% of the population has stated that they experienced depression, anxiety or distress. Palestinians are denied access to Lebanon´s public health system and thus, camp residence get primary health care at UNRWA and non-profit clinics. However, healthcare services for the Palestinians are under-resourced and staffed and over-crowded. (Anera 2012, 9; Chaaban & al. 2010, 63.)

2.3 Introducing Beit Atfal Assumoud, Shatila center, and its social workers

Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS) was founded in 1976 after the Tel al Zaatar camp massacre with the Family Happiness Project to assist and provide accommodation for survived orphaned children. Since that BAS has spanned its operation and networks, and is currently running in 10 out of 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon with different social, cultural, educational

and health projects that are mainly targeting disadvantage children, youth and women. BAS finances its services through a network of mostly European humanitarian associations as well as individual sponsoring form Europe, Asia and the Arab region, and are implemented through following programs: *Family Happiness Project*, a sponsorship program operating in all of the 10 camps to support originally only Palestinian hardship families but now increasingly also Palestinian Syrian refugee. Individual sponsors donate 30 USD monthly to a child, from which 10 USD are withdrawn for the organizational management and the rest, 20 USD, are given directly to the family. Starting by assisting only orphanage families, where the father as the main income provider had passed away, BAS has expanded its service users by considering also the so called hardship cases were the father is still alive, however, unable to work due to a severe health problem. BAS´s *Health projects* include dental clinics, reproductive health clinics and Family Guidance (mental health) centers where as the *Educational projects* consist of kindergartens, remedial classes, vocational training, and classes for dropout students, Syrian refugee children and girls for special needs as well as private scholarships. In addition, BAS organizes *Recreational activities* such as art, music folkloric dance, sports, scouts and cultural events as well as specific *gender projects* including awareness sessions, workshops and recreational activities concerning wellbeing of families. BAS also runs an embroidery project that trains and offers income generating activities for the Palestinian women living in the camps or in the nearby poor neighborhoods. Since the organization is dependent on all the foreign and local networks and partnership organizations, it facilitates meetings, visits, events and interviews with contacts in order to maintain its operation and develop its programs as well as to create new partnership possibilities and gain more sponsors.

I have only introduced a brief summary of the whole scope of services that BAS organizes around Lebanon as the focus of my theses is about social work rather than detailed examination of the different services or the organizational or project management and financial resources. However, the social workers service tasks in the camps are directly connected to some of the specific projects. Family happiness project is the first program by BAS and, as such the cornerstone of the organization. Employed social workers take care of the families under the sponsorship, visit them monthly or more if necessary, trying to respond to their needs and invite them to participate the activities at the BAS centers in the camp, although, participation in activities is an actual condition for the sponsorship. Head of the centers, with help from the social workers, receive new applicants, review the family

cases and sent further their evaluation to the management of the organization in the main office in Beirut, which makes the decision whether sponsoring is possible by the organization. Social workers, supervised by the head of the centers, monitor and coordinate the activities and are responsible for evaluating and reporting about the family cases, activities and events to the sponsors and partnership organizations as well as to receive and host visitors that the organization has accepted, thus, operating as so called "gate openers" to the camps.

Shatila center has three Palestinian social workers and the head of the center, including other staff; kindergarten teachers, remedial class and English teachers, activity instructors and a dentist, nurse, volunteers and maids. The services running in Shatila center are Family happiness project, kindergarten, remedial classes, dental clinic, reproductive health project, awareness sessions, art, music and summer activities such as scouting as well as other recreational activities, events and celebrations. Also, the social workers work closely together with the BAS´ Family Guidance Center that offers mental health services for children with special needs and their families. Each of the social workers take care of around 25 families and 50 children under the Family Happiness Project, and according to the social workers, approximately 100 people visit the center weekly for assistance. As a consequence of the Syrian war and the refugee influx to the camp, the organization has taken under its sponsoring Palestinian Syrian refugees. Also, Shatila center has integrated Syrian refugee children in its activities and remedial classes for elementary students as well as opened a special kindergarten group. Overall, the Syrian crises has increased the workload for the social workers and complicated the camp circumstances since the early days of the practice.

Shatila center was first opened in 1983 by the head of the center with the Family Happiness Project in order to assist the war affected families that had injured, displaced or/ and lost family members and their income sources. All of the social workers began their work during the first years of operation in Shatila and have since expanded the services in the center and their field experience working with the Palestinian hardship families.

3 Merging diaspora and social work discourses

3.1 The concept of diaspora

Diaspora concept has several definitions in the migration discourse and it has been widely used to support different research interests. The origins of the concept derive from the history of the Jewish dispersal and their traumatic experience of persecution. Today the concept has been used to describe various communities which have an experience of displacement, maintain transnational ties to their homeland and hope to return home one day. Diaspora concept, hence, refers to a specific experience of migration which is often connected to forced migration: forcible dispersal is one of the common criterion of a diaspora. (Clifford 1994.) According to Östen Wahlbeck (2002, 230), Diaspora simultaneously relates both to the country of settlement and the country of origin and, thus, can be used to describe the specific experiences of refugees.

However, the concept is seen problematic as its analytical examination is too dispersed and often universally used to describe any migrant community that maintain transnational connections to their homeland (Brubaker 2005, 3-4). To resolve the theoretical confusion around the concept, diaspora writers such as William Safran have defined the concept through an ideal type of definition. According to Safran (1991, 83-84) diaspora refers to:

> *"Expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original `center' to two or more `peripheral' , or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland, its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not and perhaps cannot be fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return, when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship" (Safran 1991, 83- 84).*

An ideal type of definition can specify the complex discursive field of diaspora and deepen the understanding of the concept. Never the less, as James Clifford (1994, 306) critically argues, this type of definition can lead into ambivalence as the groups would become

identified as more or less diasporic, having only few or many of the features. Moreover, diaspora communities go through chances in the course of history, depending on changing opportunities in their host countries and transnationally. Clifford himself puts emphasis on the collective identity construction and solidarity of the diaspora community based on”diasporic consciousness". Clifford (1994, 311) explains that diaspora consciousness is constituted by collective experiences of forced dispersal, discrimination and exclusion. Simultaneously, the collective suffering coexists with the skills of adaption and survival and sense of hope. Formation of the diasporic consciousness in the community is not a natural or inevitable consequence of migration. Moreover, it is grounded on specific historical events, experiences and processes. Similarly, Martin Sökerfeld (2006, 267-270) suggests that diasporic consciousness is a result of mobilization after certain possibilities, limitations, events and experiences. He defines diaspora as imagined transnational community, constructed through collective imagination of homeland and shared experiences which are maintained transnationally, across national borders. According to Nauja Klaist (2008) diaspora is often connected to minority position and experiences of suffrage, loss and deterrorialization. Many diaspora communities are fighting for political recognition and equality in their host countries. (Kleist 2008, 1138-1139.)

Despite the different emphasizes around the diaspora discourse, many of the scholars seem to agree that the core of concept consists of diasporic consciousness, sense of community and strong ideas and feelings towards the homeland. Diaspora members share traumatic experiences of forced migration and discrimination, resulting in collective solidarity in the community. (Clifford 1994; Kleist 2008; Vertovec 2009; Wahlbeck 2002.)

The research conducted on Palestinians living in diaspora is concentrated around constructions of cultural and political identities, belonging and imagining of, as well as transnational connections with, the homeland. Diasporic constructions of political unity and belonging to the homeland are manifested through politicization of the diaspora community and advocacy of the Palestinian cause. Even those, who are not particularly politically active, seem to be influenced by the narratives of the Palestinian cause. This entails the end of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, self-determination and creation of a Palestinian state and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. The Palestinian cause is directly rooted in Nakba, the catastrophe of 1948, when the Palestinian diaspora was created. (Mavroudi 2007.)

3.2 Critical postmodernism and constructive approach to social work study with diaspora communities

As a social work student from Finland, my attitudes, values and perceptions relating to social work with refugees are bound to Finnish welfare state ideology and service delivery/provision that considers social work with refugees as some sort of integration work or settlement work where the practice tasks are one way or another related in settling refugees into a new society. It is obvious that Finnish notions and conceptualizations of social work with refugees cannot apply to social work in the Palestinian refugee camp as the circumstances and the problems that people are facing are much different from the social work in the Finnish welfare state context dealing with refugees and the issues of forced migration. Yet, as Malcom Payne and Gurid Aga Askeland (2008, 4) argue, it is important to reflect the interaction between the ideas in the western social work and the non-western countries in order to establish a richer and more diverse view on the question what is social work and to perhaps challenge the dominant Western ways of thinking. Therefore, by taking a look at somewhere else where social work happens, can fuel alternative ideas and dialog between the western and non-western world about social work´s practice, theory and values (Payne 1997, 11.) This is one of the aims of this study.

Postmodernist paradigm offers a theoretical frame to examine social work according to different value and cultural bases of different societies. Simultaneously, it seeks to challenge the universal and hegemonic conceptualizations and the superiority of Western ideas in social work. Postmodernism emerged to challenge the Enlightenment eras modernist notion of social order based on reason and natural law and the attempts to develop universal categories of experiences, boundaries, classifications through typologies, uniformity and universality (Allan et.al. 2003, 3). On the contrary to modernism, postmodernism does not seek overall explanations or simplify social trends and relationships but accepts instability and complexity (Payne & Askeland 2008, 25). Postmodernism has developed as a response to the social transformation of the contemporary societies including increasing pace of change; the growing significance of difference; the growth of various new political movements and strategies, the opening up of individual choices and freedoms; and the increasing awareness of the socially constructed nature of the society. Through the wake of postmodernism significance has reoriented from gran narratives of theory to difference and diversity; language and discourse and a reconsidering the notions of power and knowledge.

(Allan et.al 2003, 3-4.) From the social work perspective, postmodern thought encourages to think that social work like other social phenomena are socially constructed; created and given meaning to in a cultural context. By accepting this assumption one must also elaborate that social work, its theories, practices and values, are bound to a specific historical and social context. Following further this idea, social work should be understood as a complex cultural construct that varies in different time and place. (Payne & Askeland 2008; Payne 1997.) Similarly, Mel Gray (2005, 231) argues for indigenization that refers to the extent to which social work practice is shaped by the social, political, economic, historical and cultural factors, and how it operates within the local context. The purpose in this approach is to consciously avoid cultural imperialism characteristics of colonial social work as a manifestation of a Western dominance and superiority as well as to learn from different cultural principles of others.

In the postmodern world, the complex global economic interdependence and the cultural interconnectedness confuses the ideas of fixed and localized national identities and subjectivities. Postmodernism encourages to recognition of complex subjects such as diasporas that do not fit in the mainstream thinking of national and cultural identities. Diasporas become the cultural "hybridity" across national borders. (Bhabha 1994.) In other worlds, in the diaspora the identities are constantly on the move, somewhere between the homeland and the hosting country, in an imagined and emotional space - home away from home (Vertovec 2009, 6). I believe that postmodern diasporas challenge social work theory, practice and values to react on the complexity in working with refugees. What are the ways that social work responses to such subjects that do not necessarily belong to any specific location but are somewhere in between the nation-states? In which ways social work is involved with political/national identity negotiations? These questions become valid especially with the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon as we are talking about such a prolonged stateless refugee situation in a context where resettlement has completely been rejected by the Lebanese society and the option of return has not yet realized and might never do so. Postmodernist views on diasporas complicate Western hegemonic ideas of social work with refugees and certainly, makes it difficult to discuss it with Western notions of integration or settlement.

Some critics of postmodernism argue that the emphasis on difference and diversity ignores larger structural forces and existence of some universally valid themes such as colonialism and class domination and hence, can obscure the material reality of oppression in which

people have unequal access to resources. (Taylor-Gooby 1993; Healy 2000.) Along with June Allan, Bob Pease and Linda Briskman (2003, 8) I perceive postmodernism in this study as a theory that does not undermine or contradict with the process of social change, social justice and human rights but instead can retain some gran historical narratives such as colonialism together with the respect towards diversity and the kind of a social work study that does not ignore the broader structures that generate oppression. In my stand point, it is, thus, possible in my study to reflect the difference in social work practice and values according to its specific cultural context without rejecting the structural power imbalances that affect social work and the life situations of its participants.

3.3 Colonialism/post colonialism, identity politics and social work

Jewish national movement, Zionism, could be determined in Ilan Pappé´s (2008, 630-631) words as *a form of colonialism* or *colonialist venture*. The Israeli´s colonial regime has been displacing and dispossessing the Palestinian indigenous population by exerting oppressive practices, laws and policies. The ongoing colonization of the historic Palestine creates frustration, anxiety and sense of hopelessness among the Palestinian refugees objected to the colonial subordination and its impacts. Colonialism is connected to cultural globalization and commonly refers to the historic period from the 1600s to the mid-1900s when European nations dominated other countries through military conquest and government, simultaneously, asserting superiority over cultural knowledge and value base (Payne & Askeland 2008, 17). In the contemporary world, direct colonialism is generally considered to be a remains of the past, however, as the Palestinian case illustrates with continuous Israeli apartheid policies, dispossession, occupation and ethnic cleansings, colonialism in deed is as a reality of today (e.g. Eid 2014), yet, perhaps not universally recognized because of the contesting narratives of the legitimacy over the land and the politically sensitive nature of the matter. The consequences of the prolonged colonialism in Palestine include varieties of political and secretarian violence in the region, subjugations of the people and the severe humanitarian distress of the displaced refugees residing in the unhuman camp circumstances in the occupied territories in Gaza and West Bank, as well as in the other Arab countries in the region. In addition to the direct oppressive impacts of colonialism, the prolonged colonial situation affects the abstract world of conceptions; the ways of thinking and knowing; creating the cultural and stereotypical “Other” that is situated at the lower levels of social,

political and economic hierarchies (compare Bhabha 1994).

When analyzing the historical oppression as well as the Western cultural superiority over "the Other", postcolonial theory offers a useful theoretical framework to describe the ongoing and pervasive effects of colonization or, better said, all the culture affected by the imperial process, including the struggle and resistance against it (Childs & Williams 1997, 3). After arguing that colonization and oppression against Palestinian indigenous population has never really ended, I do not perceive post-colonialism in this study per se as a social phenomenon after colonialism. Instead, I seek to understand it as a theoretical orientation to explain continuity of the colonial situation; the cultural, social and political powers that sustain colonialism and Western cultural imperialism, and reflect it to the social work context in the Palestinian refugee camp Shatila.

Postcolonial theory focuses on counter-discourses such as diasporic cultures in order to challenge the colonizing discourses and to recognize the colonial subjects; their experience of trauma, loss and exile as well as resistance against the colonial epistemology and culture of superiority (e.g. Goonewardena 2004, 659). Postcolonial theorist Franz Fanon emphasizes the impacts of colonialism that affect the psychic, political and social relationship between the colonizer and colonized resulting in the feeling of inferiority of "The Other" (discussed in Bhabha 1994, 42-43). Fanon further argues that non-Westeners should fight to maintain their cultures and demand for recognition and reconstruction of the racist notions and myths of the colonized cultures (Fanon 1967 ref. in Payne & Askeland 2008). Similarly, Edward Said, another influential postcolonial theorist, who is known for his commitment to the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, is concerned with the conceptualization of the complex relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, and the psychological and political aspects of the colonial influence. Said´s famous concept of *Orientalism* refers to Western power over the Orient including the mystified and unequal constructs of the Arab world by the European-Atlantic racist thought. (Discussed in Marcus 2001, 109-111.) Thus, post-colonial theory is a kind of a respond to the philosophy and epistemology of colonialism associating with questions of power, subjectivity, agency and consciousness.

Furthermore, postcolonialism is interested in identity politics that is the social and cultural resistance of the colonial subjects questioning the universalist values of modernity and the oppressive believe systems of colonialism (Allan et. al 2003, 5). In general, identity politics has come to signify a wide range of political activity founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain marginalized social groups, typically aiming at securing or

demanding political freedom and challenging dominant oppressive characterizations of the group, with a goal of greater self-determination (Heyes 2012). In the Palestinian refugee context, identity politics are used to demand for recognition on the basis of the grounds on which recognition has been denied; that is as an indigenous population of Palestine with the legitimate right to the land, self-determination, right of return, cultural recognition and human rights.

In addition to abstract theory, postcolonialism is simultaneously, a political action of resistance aimed at changing political, cultural and social structures for equity (e.g. Parsons & Harding 2011.) In this regard, post colonialism collides with social work and its concern for social justice, anti-oppression and social change. Interestingly enough, social work could be defined as social movement for social justice in its own right if abled to move away from the statutory and individualistic roots of the profession (Thompson 2002). Especially, as the interest of this study is to understand social work among the Palestinian diaspora community with the experience of colonization, offers postmodernism an important vantage point for my analysis. Satu Ranta-Tyrkkö (2010, 27) argues that postcolonial theory may help to understand prevailing local and global realities as a whole, as well as the neo colonial practices that affect the discourses and practices of social work. Along with Ranta-Tyrkkö, I place this study in the framework that enables to reevaluate taken for-granted practices and to recognize the effects of the colonial oppression and sense of “Otherness” impacting on social work practice and its participants.

3.4 Gendered social work and diaspora

Following the Palestinian exodus and after the experience of conflict in the Lebanese society, many of the Palestinian refugee women began social and charitable work as a response to their material and psychological losses to ensure the survival of their communities and families (Berger Gluck 1995, 6-7). Under the charitable humanitarian organizations such as BAS, women have taken part in grass root level activism in order to meet the needs of the refugees and heighten gender consciousness. In Shatila camp, BAS´s social workers are all women working closely with other women and mothers in the community. Their work is organized around "the women´s question" as the organization itself carries an ideological commitment for women´s empowerment and equity: "*Although our local culture highly observe women and is rich in all sorts of stories and idioms describing the high position of*

women in life as being "half the society and giving birth to the other half", or "Paradise is under the feet of mothers", "mother is the first school" etc....but all that reflects emotional theories that are abandoned once the realistic step starts with the birth of a baby girl" (BAS annual report 2011, 2).

Even though, Palestinian women seem to be culturally romanticized, men tend to have greater social, economic and political influence in the Palestinian community in Lebanon than women which raises gender equity to the agenda of social work by BAS. Yet as Julie Peteet (2000, 445) reminds, *a monolithic frame of analysis that takes as a point of departure "patriarchy", "Islam", or "nationalism" glosses over the richness of Palestinian women´s actual lives and activities and blurs the differences of region, religion, class, generation, and education, as well as the varying ways individual women have experienced their lives.* Thus, one should avoid stereotypical and essentialist conceptualization of Palestinian womanhood or Palestinian women´s experiences in life while doing research on such diverse subjects. Commonly, the concept of gender refers to a different range of appropriate behaviors, roles and positions which are socially, culturally and economically attributed to men and women. These determine the contexts and ways of life of individuals. Inequity is very central to the concept of gender. Gender inequity refers to the extent of power women and men enjoy in the society. In general, men tend to enjoy greater social, economic and political influence than women. In the feminist literature power is discussed in terms of the concept patriarchy, which has been defined as the origin and maintenance of male dominance through ideological and societal structures to which both men and women subscribe consciously and unconsciously. (E.g. Leo-Rhynie 1995, 11.) In other words, gender is the social construction of female and male identities. The way people perceive themselves, others and the social existence around them is dependent on the social construction of gender, interconnecting with other socially stratifying factors such as of nationality, race and class. The analytical symbiosis of gender, race and class also involves issues of power, privilege and equity. This means recognizing the hierarchies of domination in the society that systematically exploit and control people. (E.g. Sokoloff & Dupont 2005, 40.)

Considering gender in this study means regarding social work practice by BAS and its subjects gendered, organized by gendered expectations, positions and divisions. My gender analysis focuses especially on "the women experience" and the structural power imbalances within. Social workers encounter in their work some culturally fixed ideas about what is appropriate behavior or what are expected roles and norms in the families or broadly in the

society. It is safe to assume, thus, that social work practice responses too are shaped by culture specific notions about gender roles and expectations. By the first look, BAS´s organizational commitment and social work stand on women´s empowerment appear to intersect with feminist social work approach which, according to Lena Dominelli´s (2002, 7) definition, refers to "*a form of social work practice that takes women´s experience as the starting point of its analysis and by focusing on the links between a women´s position in society and her individual predicament, responds to her specific need, creates egalitarian relations in `client`- worker interactions and addresses structural inequalities."* However, with my dedication to postmodern paradigm, I seek to take on these arguments with terms of difference and power in the social work domain.

Incorporating gender into diaspora studies, on the one hand, aims at understanding the gendered nature of diaspora formations, experiences and identity construction. Many of the scholarly debates relating to women and diaspora concentrate, specifically, on the gendered experiences of diaspora on political identities, familial agency, social movements, and cultural reproductions (Jones-Correa 1998; Ho 1999; Yeoh & Willis 1999; Silvey 2000; Mahler & Pessar 2001; Pessar 2001; Al-Ali 2002; Mojab & Gorman 2007; Radosh 2009; Al-Sharmani 2010), all of which have a relationship with social work. I believe that the theoretical framework of diaspora, gender and social work offers kind of an approach to social work research on refugees that is culturally sensitive, crosses disciplinary boundaries in research and acknowledges the significance of identity which all, in my point of view, are important elements in grasping social work reality.

4 Research process

4.1. Research questions

In this study, I ask firstly: What is Beit Atfal Assuomoud´s social work like in the Shatila refugee camp? Sub-question to that is in which ways social work is responding to the distress of families living in the camp. Through these questions I will conceptualize the daily practices of social work in Shatila and the gendered meanings given for it, in a relation to the everyday life situations and struggles of the Palestinian families. In addition, I will elaborate on whether diasporic consciousness of the Palestinian refugee community in Shatila is shaping social work practice, and if yes, in which ways.

The purpose of this dissertation is, hence, to explore social work practice in Shatila by BAS through gender and diasporic identity construction which allows the ethnographic interpretation to expand above practical social work responses to examine the motivations, unconscious and abstract notions and justifications of social work. All the insights in this study are discussed in terms of female gender and, above all, projected on the concept of diaspora that I have used as an interpretation tool to understand the culture specific basis of the social work practice in Shatila.

4.2 Towards interdisciplinary approach and critical ethnography

The methodological terrain of this study is situated between the disciplines of anthropology and social work. By the means of ethnographic fieldwork and methods; intensive participant observation, interviewing and textual analysis, I have followed the traditional anthropological premise and traveled to unfamiliar and distant location, spent relatively long time in the field (considering the master´s studies limitations), aiming at cross-cultural comparison and in-debt analysis of the particular context and cultural meanings of human doings in order to touch upon the social and cultural world of social work practice by BAS in Shatila camp, thus, doing social work research with anthropological points of departure. The interdisciplinary approach of my theses draws its tenet from Satu Ranta-Tyrkkö´s (2010, 46) contribution to across disciplinary study and "*anthropologically orientated social work research*` that has basically been `*missing from Finnish social work research."*

I have utilized theories and discourses from several of disciplines, mainly from social work, culture and gender studies that I have found inspiring and guiding, relevant in supporting the empirical data findings and further derived discussions, at the same time, performing and learning ethnography as the method of inquiry. Ranta-Tyrkkö (2010, 26) writes that this kind of combining of different disciplines is especially common with empirical social science studies relating issues in the Global South. Moreover, *"disciplinary blinders can block our view of any interconnections between our own favored theory and others*" (Winiecki 2009, 7). Alaine Cerwonka (2007, 14) sees interdisciplinary in ethnographic research similarly: *"as a knowledge-production process that flexibly adopts approaches and tools as a consequence of the questions being asked, not as a consequence of the methodological constrains dictated by the history or current hegemony within a given discipline",* hence, critically responding to standards and boundaries set by disciplinary regimes and authority. The research questions I have asked in this study about the nature of social work, combined with the circumstances in the field, inevitably, drift towards cultural, political and gender analysis and conceptualizations in order to examine how social work by BAS is influenced by broader historical, social, cultural, political and ideological context. I find this kind of methodological approach colliding with the theoretical groundings of postmodernism and the critical social theory that I have consciously chosen to birth discussions on assumed perceptions relating to social work study, its methodological process as well as the actual sight of research. This is a process what George Marcus and Michel Fisher (1986, 137) define as *defamiliarization by epistemological critique* founded on traditional anthropological work whose ultimate purpose is to go out to the periphery of the Euro-centric world where conditions are assumed to be different or alien, and profoundly review the way we usually think about things in order to make an effort and understand what in European terms are different.

If explained, at its most general way, "*conventional ethnography refers to the tradition of cultural description and analysis that displays meanings by interpreting meanings*" (Thomas 1993, 4.) In other words, it is the study of socio cultural contexts, processes and meanings on cultural systems while observing people in their natural environment. Its recent historical developments origin from the 20th century´s Western anthropological surveys and detailed analysis by the means of long term participant observations conducted in "far off lands" in order to recognize the interconnectedness of each individual society´s cultural forms and social structures, mainly associated with the work of Bronislaw Malinowski (1926, 1945)

and Franz Boas (1928, 1931) (Davis 1999, 69 ref. in Madison 2005, 10-11). Later on scholars from the Chicago school of ethnography transformed the intellectual concentration on urban areas and socially marginal populations and, moreover, " *subverted the traditional value laden view of cultural difference by shifting the research focus from one of individual or group pathology to one in which behaviors defined as odd by the dominant culture made "normal" sense to the subordinate participants…and laid the foundation for a vibrant and increasingly methodologically sophisticated program of interpretive urban ethnography*" (Thomas 1993, 11). In a relation to qualitative social science research, ethnography as analytical tool and set of methods can able to see the social reality more vivid and indebt through the rich and deep experiences in the field than possible with other social science theories. Furthermore, it encourages reconsideration of these experiences and knowledge in a new way, facilitated by the methods of persistent observation and talk with informants in official interview settings as well as informally, including other forms of ethnographic data collection such as documentation gathering (Winiecky 2009, 15-16). Also, "*at best, though relying on cases in particular social worlds, ethnographic can capture social processes, arrangements, and doings that are observable and applicable beyond their particular context*"(Ranta-Tyrkkö, 2010, 43).

Grasping insights from the traditional ethnographic methodology, I have used the very conventional ethnographic methods; interviews, field observations and textual analysis, as well as, grounded the field work on ethnographic theory by interpreting cultural meanings in its socio- cultural context, however, at the same time, finding appropriate to move beyond the conventional applying of ethnographic methodology towards more critical conceptualization, values and performance of ethnography because of the value base and the aim of my theses. From the very beginning of my research process, after the topic selection and first literature readings, even before the actual field work, I was gravitating towards critical ethnographic theory because of my personal and "professional" ideological commitment to anti-colonialism and social justice, theoretical interest in diaspora studies and the incipient assumption about the political and emancipatory nature of social work among the Palestinian camp refugees, only proven stronger after initial field observations. In addition, I was the most aware that the audience of my master´s theses was not only going to be the students and teachers of my university but also the social workers and the organization that was the sight of my study. After being hosted and welcomed to conduct my field work in Shatila, where refugees are known to suffer from inequity, I felt a strong

sense of obligation to have my theses to speak on behalf of the subjects of my study and to have a political purpose to advocate for social justice to Palestinian refugees as well as to take critically part in cross-cultural or international discussions/comparisons about social work theory, practice and values. These might be too ambitions objectives for my theses, yet, as moral principles above all they have guided me throughout the study. In Soyini Madison´s (2005, 5) words: *"critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain*".

Critical ethnography is a style of analysis and discourse embedded within traditional ethnography, yet, the difference is in the process of choosing the kind of alternative concepts and making value-based judgments of meaning and method to challenge dominant research and politics, and other forms of human activity. Thus, questioning the taken for granted assumptions and disturbing the status quo for the purpose of emancipation and conditions of human freedom, social justice and well-being. (Thomas 1993, 4-5; Madison 2005, 5.) Jim Thomas (1993, 7-9) further speaks about *"resisting domestication*" by which he refers to the research process of navigating through the surface to reach the voices and experiences of subjects who would not otherwise be heard and speak for them. The goal of critical ethnography is to theorize social structural constrains and human agency, as well as the interconnectedness between structure and agency to empower researched (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma 2001, 193.) In the early decades of ethnographic fieldwork, the scientific empirics and objective systematic analysis did not have space for subjectivity, ideology or emotions whereas the current emphasis on reflexive ethnography or critical ethnography and its critique to neutrality and objectivity recognizes the value-loaded classifications, meanings and ideologies affecting field work methodology. The ethnographers own position and conscious choices shape the interpretation practice throughout the research process (Alasuutari 2011, 103-106; Madison 2012, 7-8) Over all, critical ethnography draws attention to manifestations of power, researcher´s position and location, and reflection (McPherson 2014, 10). Even though ethnographer attempts to demonstrate the viewpoint of her subjects, it does not mean that we can "*submit value judgments in place of facts or to leap to "ought" conclusions without demonstrable cogent theoretical and empirical linkage*" (Thomas 1993, 22). Accordingly, as an ethnographer, I have a responsibility to *objectively* as possible interpret *subjective* data and reflect the processes and the choices I've made on the way, as well as, to consolidate the linkages between subjective meanings, theory and methodology into a comprehensive body of research.

Following this ethnographic premise, I have tried to remain sensitive to structural imbalances and personal agency in interpreting social work practice by BAS and the given meanings of its participants while drawing linkages to my theoretical discourses, thus, regarding the wider cultural, political and ideological interconnections. This, however, brings me to one of the most personally puzzling questions of my research process: What actually are the linkages or interrelationship between theory, method and empirical data? First above all, as Soyini Madison (2012, 12-13) emphasizes, the imposed criticism, ethics as well as the practice of ethnography require theoretical understanding as theory guides the meanings and definitions embedded in design and analysis and the whole interpretive practice. However, a methodological process completes the task, better to say, critical ethnography becomes "*the performance of critical theory"*. Theory and method are "*the same in that theory is used in ethnography as an interpretive or analytical method"* (Ibid. 2012, 12-13.) Therefore, relying on this point, I have merged my main theoretical lenses of critical postmodernism and constructivism as well as postcolonial diaspora and gender in order to use them as a critical ethnographic analytical tool to interpret the experiences and meaning in the field and lead me through the processes and choices as well as, my research morality.

4.3. Positionality in this study: In and out of the field

> *"A grasp of what we seek to understand is always mediated by the positionality of the inquirer, without which the information would be meaningless, uninterpreted, "uncooked"" (Cerwonka 2007, 26).*

Initial reflections

In December 2013, I landed Beirut, Libanon that was, after many years, my second visit in the city. Looking back six years, I would have never expected that one day I was to enter the Palestinian refugee camp, Shatila in Beirut in order to conduct a field work and collect data for my master´s theses in social work. I had gradually throughout my university studies developed interest in refugee and diaspora studies, yet, it was a result of chain of coincidences that I was researching social work in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. In the beginning of my Maste´s Thesis- seminar in the fall 2013, out of a sudden it crossed my mind that I had heard Global Social Work Finland, an organization operating within the University of Tampere, having connections to a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon and cooperation with a local NGO, and that it had previously sent a student for a field placement

in the camp. Soon enough, after few meetings and e-mails, I received an acceptance and welcoming letter from the director of BAS, I was signing internship contract with Global Social Work Finland, and designing a research plan to integrate my master´s theses into the three- month-long internship, or better, fieldwork in the camp. I feel safe now to admit that I did not know anything about Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, or that a refugee camp like Shatila existed in the world and it had local social workers. I was entering a totally unfamiliar world of knowledge and experiences, yet, feeling very motivated and intrigued to learn more.

By the time I reached Lebanon, I had read numerous of articles about the camp and its history, watched documentaries and seen pictures of the environment and read narratives about the camp life. I knew, that was entering to an over-crowded urban slum in the southern neighborhoods of Beirut where people were suffering from extreme poverty under the discriminatory laws of the Lebanese government. After initial readings, I understood that Shatila was famous camp worldwide and historically significant place in the Palestinian national memory of lost and suffrage because of the Sabra and Shatila massacre of 1982. Yet, I was not sure what to expect, feeling anxious and nervous. I had arrived in Beirut two weeks before my fieldwork and met local people with whom I had discussed my purpose of visit in the city. Many initial responses were surprised that I would enter the camp alone without security and I was often wished good luck in a quite ironic sense as the camp and its surrounding seemed to have some sort of notorious and dangerous connotations. I was told how Sabra and Shatila were hiding places for drug abusers, small criminals, murderers and terrorists. I realized, though, that not many actually knew where the camp was or had ever visited inside. Whereas others appeared encouraging and proud of me, others were kind ununderstanding of my solidarity and sympathy towards the Palestinians in Lebanon. In any case, I figured out how sensitive and divisive topic the Palestinian refugee presence in the Lebanese society was. I noticed too that many seemed suspicious about the local and international NGOs operating in Lebanon and if they were really doing any good. Even when I was not in the field, regardless, I found myself repeatedly engaging in conversations and even debates about Palestinian rights over dinner tables. Although, my arguments were based on quite a thin knowledge and inexperience, yet it may have showed, above all, my ideological commitment and emotional involvement in my fieldwork.

My first day in the camp is worth of reflection as it gave birth to feelings, sensations and questions that were prevailing and overpowering most of my fieldwork period. In the

morning of November 15, 2013 my roommate drove me next to the Sabra and Shatila neighborhood, where the BAS head office was located. I met briefly with the director, and was welcomed to conduct my fieldwork within the organization. After a short while, a driver drove me into the camp and Shatila center to meet all the social workers and other staff. To my surprise, I came into a middle of a party to celebrate children who had participated in the 2013 Beirut marathon. The center was crowded; some of the children came curiously to greet me and wished me welcome. I only made a quick acquaintance with the head of the center, social workers and other staff as everybody seemed busy organizing the party. However unexpectedly, I was asked on my first day if I wanted to go to meet a family and tour around the camp. One of the social workers took me and another girl who was visiting the center for my first family visit in the Shatila refugee camp. Next, we were all sitting in a small room around a table at an orphanage family house. I was swallowing my tears and sweating from the strong Arabic coffee while the mother and children were crying for their father who had recently passed away. The social worker asked me if I wanted to ask something from the family but at that moment there was nothing I could have thought or wanted to ask. I was not even thinking about my thesis but how to keep myself composed and how to express my condolences. I felt uncomfortable and emotional to have entered their private space and hearing personal grieving because it was all arranged only for the purpose of me and the other girl meeting a Palestinian family in Shatila. I felt sorry and helpless; I could not even say anything in Arabic except for ´thank you´. I tried to express politeness, respect and warmness as I possibly could only by my meaner and gestures. The social worker said condolences for me too, as a cultural tradition we kissed for goodbye and left back for the center where the celebrations were still continuing. I recovered quickly after watching children´s Dabke dance performance, listening to Arabic music, and eating cake and pastries. The children invited me to dance too and I was feeling happy, inspired and exited to have received such a warm welcoming and being surrounded by all the new people and cultural experience.

On the wall of the celebration hall was hanging a knitted art work with a printed picture of two women hugging and crying, surrounded by names of all the families that had gotten killed or disappeared in the Sabra and Shatila massacre. The art was made by Finnish artists and was introduced to me by a Finnish lady who had a long history of friendship and partnership with the social workers. While listening to her introduction and speech to all the people in the room, I was feeling touched by the friendship between her and the social

workers and her years of devotion to help families living in the camp. That day, the violence and social suffering in the camp written in the pages of news and articles transformed into something interpersonal and embodied that was difficult for me to comprehend and deal with. At the end of the day, I had a private moment with the head of the center who asked me what were my wishes and objectives of the visit. I was there to learn and to do research on social work, nevertheless, I found myself stuttering when I had to explain my objectives as if I was not quite sure my self what I was supposed to do which made me feel insecure. To say the least, my first day in the camp contained mixed feelings of confusion, stress, sadness, joy and excitement that caught me off guard like emotional rushes on a roller-coaster ride that I am still facing, at this moment, while writing my research report.

“Doing research”

We agreed together with the social workers that I was daily, (mainly during the weekdays), from the morning until afternoon, going to participate and follow all the activities and kindergarten lessons in the center and, most of all, follow social workers in their daily work, visit as much as families as possible, and in the end, conduct recorded interviews. I was feeling confused about my expected role as an ethnographer who was trying to focus my research interest, accumulate knowledge and deepen my understanding in order to know where to look, how to observe and what to ask next in a systematic way, as a contrary to my role as a student who simply wanted to know everything about everything; to get a picture as a whole and was allowed to feel emotional and to be "unwise". Step by step, I was learning more about the organization´s operation and activities, family cases, as well as, social workers duties, however, words "doing research" did not fit into my vocabulary, nor did I saw myself as a researcher. I was a student learning ethnography while trying to perform as an ethnographer, yet I was feeling desperate and insecure at times whether I was able to succeed and collect adequate data for my theses.

My role as a student who was conducting an internship opposed to exclusively an ethnographer doing fieldwork, I believe impacted on how I was related to by my informants. The social workers treated me often "motherly" and "nurturing" manner as I was a young girl in a foreign country, that was even dangerous at times. They were mentors and instructors for me and I was conscious of myself, trying to be polite at all times and find right moments to ask questions without disturbing their daily routines too much and being too demanding of their time for my own purposes. I was told by the head of the center that the social workers would do all they can to facilitate my research, yet, reminded me too about their busy

schedules performing all the daily duties. Therefore, it was challenging for me to find my place within the social workers daily routines because I simply could not be present only by listening and throwing in some detailed questions. I really felt I needed detailed explaining and time in conversations in order for me to understand without the knowledge of local language. Especially, at the early phases of the fieldwork, I was feeling frustrated and embarrassed about not speaking Arabic and finding difficult to understand what I was told, even in English because of the somewhat restricted knowledge of English by the social workers. Also, during the family visits, I could not help wishing that I could have communicated in a natural way without constant mediation and translation and, moreover, being able to observe social workers and their service users natural verbal interaction. I assume my visit was a little exhausting for the social workers too to have sort of extra duty, me, to be explained, taught and considered in their everyday tasks, even though, they reassuringly explained to me that it was part of their work.

Without paying attention while actually happening, I got very used to social workers´ expressions and their ways of constructing the sentences. The communication became more effortless, making sense after spending so much time together. With children, the lack of mutual language was not my concern, especially, at moments, when doing something together in the center, such as playing, drawing and crafting or practicing Dabke dance. I was satisfied that I was able to take part in the activities and to do things together while observing what was happening around me. Communication wise, the family visits were always more challenging because they were moments when intimate family situations were shared with me, yet, I was unable to engage in dialog. I was either being translated the content of conversation with the social workers and the service users, or my questions and the service users answers were mediated through social workers, making situations seem like translated interview settings rather than mutual conversation and dialog. I had made conscious decision, however, to leave notebooks or recorders out, except for the official recorded interview cases, in order for me to stay present and interactive in other ways during family visits. I would like to think that the ways of interaction that are not easy to put in words such as body language, eye contacts, smiles and so on mattered in shaping the situations sort of natural and direct, of course let alone, the presence of familiar social worker. Also, even though I usually had some particular questions in my mind, I did not want to dictate the course of conversations but to adjust to the individual situation and conversation, thus, trying to respond and catch on to topics that would come out fore without

my inducts. Sometimes I would feel natural sharing my own personal experiences in life. On the one hand, quite often I was clueless to perform otherwise as being overwhelmed by the sensitivity and amount of new information that I was receiving daily, and some lack of focus and consistency research wise. Nevertheless, I believe my own adjustability, interactivity and openness, as well as the fact that I was a young female student led into moments with my female informants where I felt I was accepted and, also, that my informants felt comfortable talking with me. All the issues around family life were easier for me to approach through shared experience of "womanhood" that created common ground for conversations. Child care and family issues were sort of natural topics in a room of only women sitting around and drinking coffee. For instance, I was playing with children, eating and taught how to prepare Arabic dishes or how to tie a veil, showed family pictures and shared happy family memories during some family visits as well. These were all memorable moments for me, and probably only possible because of my female gender. Gradually, I was gaining confidence in the new environment, feeling more open and direct with people I met, yet, being careful too when, how and what to ask in order to remain respectful. However, it was not until afterwards that I realized how difficult and emotional some moments were to find words and relate to during the fieldwork. Perhaps, it was not unusual at all to feel "lost" and overpowered by emotional confusion.

"Otherness"

Whereas verbal communication wise I was unable to bridge gaps and "get close to", I believe many commonalities such as my gender, young age, student position and nationality helped me to narrow down some of the hierarchies in the field. I was treated as somebody to be taught, informed and taken care of, rather than a researcher with a knowledge authority. Also, the fact that I was Finnish national gave me an advantage point. Often the social workers or other staff of the organization shared with me their nice memories with Finnish partners, visitors or friends. One of the administrator workers in the head office told me once that in her opinion the reason why Finns are sympathetic towards the Palestinian refugee problem is because we have been colonized in our history but never been the colonizers. Thus, I assume that my nationality too, on some level, created trust within the organization. Nonetheless, it was obvious I could not just blend in and I was continuously conscious of my difference. I certainly looked apart with my pale skin and blond hair and my personal clothing style, yet, I was respectfully covered at all times and humble with colors, make ups etc. Where I was from, the socio-economic, religious and educational context was distinctly

different. As such, I was an outsider and somebody who could have never truly related to the experiences Palestinians had gone through in Lebanon. The difference was often reinforced by the social workers through comparisons between the social, political and economic conditions in Finland and Lebanon. I was conscious about the power relations inherent in these differences and feeling often conflicted about moving in and out from the camp to my home in Lebanon that was situated in a much better neighborhood, with all the commodities, hot water, electricity, new home suppleness in order for me to stay "comfortable" during my stay in Lebanon. However, my choice was a matter of security too. As a symbolic example though, it represents the difference, distance and sense of otherness I was feeling. Some of the mothers and children, who I met, probably saw me as a potential sponsor or somebody who could help them in some ways which impacted on what I was told or how I was treated. I was always welcomed with great hospitality and respect into the families, which I believe to be an important, genuine cultural custom, however, performed out of duty too as a condition for access to the BAS sponsorship program. I was always an outsider and the cultural, political, social and economic "other" based on my race, class, ethnic privilege even in times of closeness or trust. As being particularly interested in gendered meanings, I had to deal with my own position as a cultural and gendered "being" asking questions, engaging in conversation and trying to make sense of what I was hearing, seeing and experiencing. I was struggling to undress my own assumptions and norms, and to see through the taken for granted, patriarchal filed context in order to dig deeper and not to rush into generalized perceptions.

Sights and senses

To my surprise, people in the neighborhood did not pay that much attention to me and I never received hostility, yet every time, my adrenaline was pumping a little when I walked on the streets alone because of the threat of explosives, over-crowdedness and all the unfamiliar senses - what I saw, smelled or heard. One of the social workers had showed me a way into the camp, and after that I always walked the same route through the Sabra neighborhood into the Shatila camp. It made me feel safe and comfortable because to me the environment looked confusing with never-ending little shops, bazaars, identical and labyrinthine blocks and streets. Otherwise, I was afraid I would lose my sense of orientation. Without speaking Arabic, I was not able to ask help for direction and not many taxis entered the camp. Moreover, I felt sense of comfort recognizing the same shopkeepers every day and noticing they recognized me too. Sometimes I would meet familiar faces from the center or

pump into mothers that I had visited, making me feel a little more included. Sabra neighborhood was full of street vendors, clothing shops, bakeries and butcheries. It had an outdoor market attached to a Mosque which is an ideal place to find fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs and spices with lower price. The streets were always busy with people walking on the streets, men peddling, sitting in a little coffee and tea shops, women shopping and children running around, especially in the afternoons when the schools and kindergartens would finish for the day. I had to watch for the scooters speeding and honking away and find my way through the crowd and shops. While walking down the streets I could smell the open drainage ditches filled with garbage and leftovers from the butcheries. The streets were often flooded and muddy because of the winter and rainy season. The neighborhood seemed as a poor, busy and over-crowded commercial area where families were running their daily errands.

Every day, I crossed the same entrance from the market into the camp, and recognized the picture of The Dome of The Rock in the old city of Jerusalem on a banner at the entrance and the flowing flags of Palestine, Fatah and Lebanon that were attached to it. The crumbled walls of the buildings in the camp had bullet holes and posters of Palestinian martyrs from which I only recognized Jasser Arafat but understood from it that the people in the camp were determined not to forget the victims and heroes of the Palestinian past. The street from the entrance onward separated Sabra and Shatila from each other. The street was one of the main streets of the massacre, where the people were taken from their homes to the street and slaughtered. The images haunted me often as I walked on the street towards the BAS center in the camp. From the main street, I took a left turn into a little off street, a narrow, dark and wet alleyway, on which the BAS center was located. Above the head, between concreate block buildings hanged a tangled web of electric wires and water pipes. I was told to be careful not to touch the wires when walking on the streets because of the danger of electric shock. The camp seemed to me like a labyrinth with all the dark and narrow alleyways. I could not find my way alone because I had always depended on social workers´ guidance and did not feel brave enough to step out of my comfort zone and break the safety of routines when it came to exploring the camp. After some time I could recognize the same street corners, bakeries, pharmacies, littles shops and stalls, UNRWA school and the martyrs cemetery. In many parts, the streets were dirty, trashy and smelly but inside the houses were clean, tidy and homelike with cushions, sofas or mattresses, as well as, Arabic and religious decorations in the walls and tables. Yet, the houses were decayed, concise, cold and often

moldy and humid. In addition, the camp residents were lacking proper water and electricity distribution.

Some days I sat in the Shatila office writing my fieldnotes, reading, and looking around while the social workers would have their meetings, writing reports and meeting service users. I felt kind of invisible as everybody, even most of the service user and sponsored families, had gotten used to me being around in the center. The office had three desks for all of the social workers and a little computer table which was definitely outdated. I felt sorry for the social workers when they were typing their reports as the electricity would go on off, in every 4 hours, shutting the computer down in the middle of working process. Often, we sat moments in the dark with little battery lambs on, in cases, the generator was not working. The office was on the ground level, attached to other building so that sun light could not enter the room. In December and January the center was so cold and humid with no heating system that we were all sitting inside with our winter clothes on. The office was most of the times busy, people coming in and out; the mothers and the sponsored children came to meet their social workers or to collect their monthly financial aid; volunteering youth would come ask advices, other youth came to greet. In the afternoon, the kindergarten children would come downstairs from the upper level class rooms and play around before picked up home. On the ground level, next to the social workers´ office was the office of the head of the center that was perhaps the most private space in the whole center. She received all the new applicants/families and visitors and overall was in charge of all the activities and family work. Opposite of her office was the small dental clinic and a kitchen. The whole center was decorated with photos of activities, children´s drawings and posters and flags of Palestine and other partnership countries of the organization, including Finland. On the fifth level of the building, above the kindergarten classes, activity rooms and a celebration/show hall was a small roof terrace and playground for the kindergarten children. The view from the terrace was a cloud of electric wires above all torn down ruins and gray buildings.

Out of the field

In the afternoons I left for home which was only few kilometers away from the camp, yet, felt like a totally different world. I was living in the Amal militia's controlled Shia neighborhood with Canadian and Syrian roommates as well as getting to know Lebanese people and culture on my free time. I was stepping in and out of the field daily, not only literally but also abstractly speaking. My mind was away from the field, again filled with new information, contacts and experiences. The most exhausting part of the fieldwork period

was writing field notes after coming home from the center, to go back to the moments, reflect, experience and feel again what had happened that day while already feeling distant, yet the distance was needed for me to see beyond the stressors and confusion that field experience was creating. It was not until the last day of my fieldwork that I felt all of my emotions erupting in an unexpected way. All the staff at the Shatila center had organized a farewell party. The head of the center gave a little speech how time had flied so quickly and how everybody had gotten used to me being around. I was wished good luck, danced around and offered the same Arabic foods and cake like in other celebrations we had had during my visit. I burst into tears that did not end until I had said my goodbyes and left the camp. Until that moment I had tried to remain composed, think, analyze, and understand, and it was a sense of relief to let all of it out, that, if nothing else, I had been touched and gained a memorable experience.

4.4. Study design and the main informants

As I have already implied in the previous reflection chapter, during my three- month- long fieldwork I participated most of the activities and celebrations that were organized at the center and followed the social workers to any Palestinian occasion outside the camp. I also had conversations with the organization´s management and administrative staff. I visited all together 36 families in Shatila and surrounding, nearby neighborhoods. Majority of the families were under the BAS sponsorship program, however, some were other connections that the social workers were holding in the community such as friends, volunteers, survivors of Sabra and Shatila massacre or Palestinian refugees from Syria. Principally, the families were chosen according to social workers "business" in the families as I was following social workers natural daily routines. Few times I was invited to visit social workers´ friends after work. Social worker/s was present during all of my family visits and, also, translated all the conversations, as well as, the formal recorded interviews at the site. I have written fieldnotes all together 38 pages that I transcribed after coming to Finland. I had enlisted and written down points and "factual" information about the social work cases, who said-what said in the conversations, my line of thoughts, insights, feelings and wonders in the field but was struggling to reach in descriptive and indebt observation writing because of my somewhat groping fieldnote writing techniques. However, I wrote 6 analytical and self-reflective internship course reports about my observations that were later on helpful in the analysis

process as I had in each of them began to draw connections to theory. The writing of my reports helped me to organize my insights and focus the course of my study. At the end of my field work, I conducted 12 thematic recorded interviews of 3 social workers, 6 mothers and 3 children (girls). During one interview, the father of the family participated as well, and during another interview, the mother´s adult daughter was present and answering some of the question. I had asked each of the three field social workers to choose 2 different kind of available and willing families, where the father of the family had either passed away or was still alive. The interviewed children were also chosen by one of the social workers. The interviews are comprised of 36 pages after transcription into textual form through computerized data entry. I have corrected only the major grammatical mistakes in the quotations in order to ease the reading of the text.

I have decided to refer Shatila camp continuously in this study as the site of field work even though some of the families lived outside "borders" of the camp. However, the living conditions were ultimately very similar among the service user families inside the camp and in the nearby neighborhoods. Also the social workers were referring to Shatila when discussing in general about the family circumstances. Most of my time in the field was spent in Shatila and the center from where the social workers left for visit those service user families who lived outside the camp. My main informants are the 3 social workers and the head of the center who are referred to by their occupational status throughout the study as well as the mothers of the families I visited during my field work. The 3 field social workers are numbered: 1, 2 and 3 in the interview quotations. The interviewed mothers are quoted with running numbers too; as mother 1, mother 2, and mother 3 etc. Only for the reason to bring richness to the dissertation, the three children are quoted with imaginative names and their real ages.

I began my fieldwork by spending most of my days with *social worker 2*, having indebt discussions and visiting some of the families (8 visits) that were under her responsibility. However, majority of the informal and detailed conversations and family visits in the field were conducted with *social workers 1* (20 visits) because of her more comprehensive knowledge of English as well as her professional responsibility to receive visitors of the center and facilitate possible interviews and represent the social workers. On couple of occasions, depending on her time, I sat down with *the head of the center* for the purpose of more in-depth discussion and unofficial interviewing than possible during the normal daily routines. *Social worker 3*, on the one hand was absent from the center most of my stay

because she was substituting a social worker in a BAS center in another camp. Nonetheless, I got a chance to spend one day with her too, visiting families she was taking care of and conducting interviews with 2 of her sponsorship families (5 visits). Her personal interview was translated by *social worker 1* during the setting because of the language barriers. Even though *social worker 1* has contributed to my study in great deal by facilitating majority of the family visits and interviews, explaining and presenting the social workers and their practice, I have spent a lot of time with my other informants too and participated in BAS´s activities engaging daily with other people at the center. Also it is worth to note, that all of the social workers know each other well, coming from the similar motivations and circumstances, and having mutually long experience in social work on the ground. Therefore, her role in representing others is not as questionable as it would be in the case where social workers´ professional experiences were clearly demerged.

The study design was not a systematic, clear lined process nor did I have explicit technics or directions how to do ethnography. As Allaine Cerwonka (2007, 20) reminds, *ethnography cannot be reduced to a set of standardized techniques that any practitioner can implement.* Many of my choices in the field were based on intuition and possibility. I wanted to take part in everything possible and visit or talk to whoever possible, having something to do with social work in the camp in order to reconstruct a holistic interpretation about the nature of social work in the camp. Especially, this kind of an approach was crucial in the beginning because of my limited knowledge and experience about my topic. However, it was challenging for me to narrow down my research interest and I was struggling to know what accounted for as data oppose to general back ground information and contextualization. In other words, what should I be observing and what to write to my fieldnotes at the end of the day. Simply, without deliberate action, I was naturally writing whatever had caught my attention, or made me think and wonder until I was able to focus my interest. Obviously, I had time constrains and I was dependent on social workers´ schedules as well as their conditions where I was taken along and who I was ought to meet and talked to. Even though BAS´s social work is inseparably linked to the organizational framework, my focus orientated mainly towards the social work practice and its value-bases, the concrete and abstract world of action in a relation to families and community, rather than the organizational management, administration or operational principles.

Regarding my intuition during the research process, I mean the motivation and inspiration developed through theoretical understanding as well as the gradual learning progress that

have guided me through decisions and design process. Towards the end of my field work, I began to have an idea which direction my study was about to go. It was clear to me that "*gendered social work*" was going to be one of the main themes because of all the female informants, the organizational principles and activities, and the fact that social workers were dealing mostly with the mothers of the families. Secondly, the theme of "*memory* and "*victimhood*" emerged, leaning on previous scholarly work and theoretical discourses as well as the cultural and political context that was observably connected to BAS´s recreational activities at the center, as well as, to social workers motivations and given meanings to work every day, from morning until evening to help the families in the community. I was also constantly keeping in mind that social work is, where ever performed, always based on certain ideology, values and morality. Thirdly, I was interested in forming an idea about family cases, what issues social work was dealing with. Lastly, I wanted to get answers how the relationships between social workers and service user mothers were understood and what were the practical/ concrete responses to help families and why, as well as, what social workers understood difficult/ challenging or successful in their everyday work. In addition, I was aware of the changing cultural and social pattern in the community because of initial readings, and thus, understood it was relevant to relate my questions about social work cases and the practice to the concept of "*change*". These themes led me to construct my interview questions (appendix 1).

All of the interview situations were each individual, only guided by the thematic entities and questions. I was able to pursue follow up questions and drift from the topic if the discussion was ought to take different kind of direction, yet, I was also persistent to ask certain questions for the sake of quotations as I kind of knew already the nature of answers according to previous informal discussions. The issue or concept had already stood out many times in many different occasions. Even though some unexpected information occurred during the official interviews, I was by that time gotten a hint about social work in the camp and how my study was about to construct. Nonetheless, after collecting my data and returning to Finland I had to reframe my research questions and attach the analytical tools of diaspora and gender to respond adequately to my data as well as to dig deeper under the surface of my vague, initial question that of, what is social work like in Shatila camp.

4.5. Analyzing the data

The conceptualization process of my insights began already in the field, simultaneously, clarifying the focus of my theses. Nevertheless, I was still very insecure about my data after returning back to Finland and finishing the transcription of the data into textual form. I had to rewind back to the field and rewrite some of my fieldnotes as most of them unclear and rushly written. In other words, I still continued the observation process according to my memories and insights that was, at that moment, somehow easier as I had all the concentration for the job, my thoughts was more focused and the conceptualization process had started to form. After transcripting the field notes, I began drawing complimentary connections between the field observations and interview data in order to make a comprehensive idea about both of my data sources and their accounts by marking thematic interconnections. I kept reading through my data repeatedly, getting familiar with it but was struggling at first to interpret the meanings and find anything, indebt, "interesting" or new from the data and, moreover, how to link the insights to my theoretical and methodological orientation. However, as Jim Thomas (1993, 43) notes, interpretation of data is the defamiliarization process in which we should be able to revise what we have seen in the field and translate into something new. The cultural criticism in the analysis process, on the one hand, means bringing the insights gained on the periphery back to the core to challenge our settled ways of thinking and conceptualization (Marcus & Fisher 1986, 138). In my case, the defamiliarization required time and distance from the field, yet I felt still emotionally attached to the whole experience. After the return, I found myself missing Lebanon and the people I had met in and out the field, and feeling kind of out of place in my own home town. Reading through the data brought up memories that I was personally connected to and sensitive about. Allaine Cerwonka (2007, 31-32) discusses this issue with terms of objectivity/ neutralization and proximity/ distance, by which she concludes that empathy is not always the most analytically useful stance in knowledge production, yet equally, objectivity or production of adequate ethnographic knowledge is not a matter of proximity or distance but it is most of all, an epistemological idea. Drawing on Cerwonka´s insight, my sympathetic stand or emotional investment did not ultimately hamper the interpretation process or "objectiveness" of my analysis, yet, I had to work on to channel the feelings and distant myself enough in order for me to truly interpret or "defamiliarize" my data. My personal emotions *served as a mirror,* like Sheryl Kleinman and Martha Copp (1993, 50)

describe, to reflect the personal feelings of confusion, ethical considerations and ideological commitment, and, I began to identify the ideological commitment behind the social work practice thorough my own personal feelings towards my informants and the fieldwork experience.

I have analyzed my data using thematic analysis which refers to the process of reviewing, identifying and reporting patterns of cultural meaning within the data, and coding, organizing or marking them in thematic structure (Braun & Clarke 2006, 79), where identification of themes are done both inductively; data-driven and deductively, on the basis of theoretical concepts or ideas. As demonstrated by Jennifer Fereday & Eimear Muir-Cochrane (2006), this kind of a hybrid approach on thematic analysis can complement the research questions by using prior ideas or concepts to reach another level of interpretive understanding as well as allow themes to emerge directly from the data. At first, I searched the text for themes relating to social work service user cases, social work practical responses and activities (how social work had helped the families) and the relationships between social workers and service users and marked them with different colored pens in order to understand social work as a practical "whole". I continued seeking for commonalities and differences between the service user cases, dividing them into social hardship and orphanage case categories (division first made by the social workers) after which I used my "gender lenses" and marked all the statements that had a gender dimension in order to interpret the gendered meanings within the categories. It is important to note at this point that throughout the analysis, I kept in mind the social, political and cultural context of the study, especially the analytical tools of gender and diaspora as well as the concept of "*change*" in the community while coding my data, trying to search for interrelationships within the conceptualizations, further accumulating the concepts above one another, to sort of deepen the interconnections step by step which also transcends to the written patterns and order of the analysis chapters. In this sense, the inductively emerged themes were analyzed deductively derived from my research questions (see figure 1).

In a relation to the family cases and the within inductively emerged "problem" categories (*social, economic, health, education*), I began coding social workers´ responses finding connections to the Palestinian humanitarian emergency context. Also, management procedures and professionalism discourses appeared to me as part of practical social work responses. Continuing gender analysis, I compressed the social work responses into a gendered category of family centered work and moved from the practical level to

interpersonal level and examined the practice relationships, finding two dominant gendered themes: care and control. While marking the themes I tried to bare in my the epistemological stand of cultural criticism, hence, pointing out power relations and contesting generalized assumptions as well as to reflect the insights against my knowledge of western notions of social work theory, thus, using *cross-cultural juxtaposition* in order to also *challenge the subject of observation at home* (Marcus & Fisher 1986, 138). The first analysis chapter is a gender analysis with a critical approach to social work practice by BAS, its relationships and family responses creating the foundation to the next level of the analysis.

During the initial reviewing of the text, I had marked themes that provided basis of a conceptual model of *social change, education, motherhood, justice, memory* (including *victimhood and agency*) and *hope*. All of these were notions reflecting the ideology behind and justifications for the social work practice, simultaneously shaping the action, in other words, the set of ideas performed in action. I had searched for objectives, motivations and given purposes for the social work practice already in the field and was now revising them again into themes from the textual data, consciously directed by the concept of diaspora, thus, revising the data against my research questions. Even though all of the concepts above constitute social work practice ideology, after subsequent theme reviewing, I decided to divide them into two entireties: *social work practice ideology* and *the role of diasporic consciousness* because of the differential abstract levels of the concepts in a relation to my research questions. The first theme encompasses subthemes of social change, education, independence and justice with derived discussions. I continued examining the themes through gender and sought for interconnections between my informant mothers, social work responses in a relation to mothers, and the ideological points of views or value bases, and further aggregated the insights. According to my interpretations, these concepts were analytically "a step closer" or, better, more effortlessly connected to social work responses conceptualizations.

The later entirety, in turn, with concepts of *memory, agency, victimhood, hope* and *resilience*, spans the analysis into another level and is more effortlessly connected to the background theory, the prior ideas. These concepts sharpened and found their shape, making sense, while I was already writing my analysis but still reading through the data and revising the concepts and interrelationships, hence, the analysis process was continuously ongoing and reaching depth even during the writing, all in all reflexive process. I have tried to illustrate my findings by following a principle that each chapter connects upon another and

"reveals" more so at the end, all the concepts create a conceptual nexus, moving from practical and concrete word of social work into the ideological world that is so to speak behind the curtains or simply unrevealed by the first look.

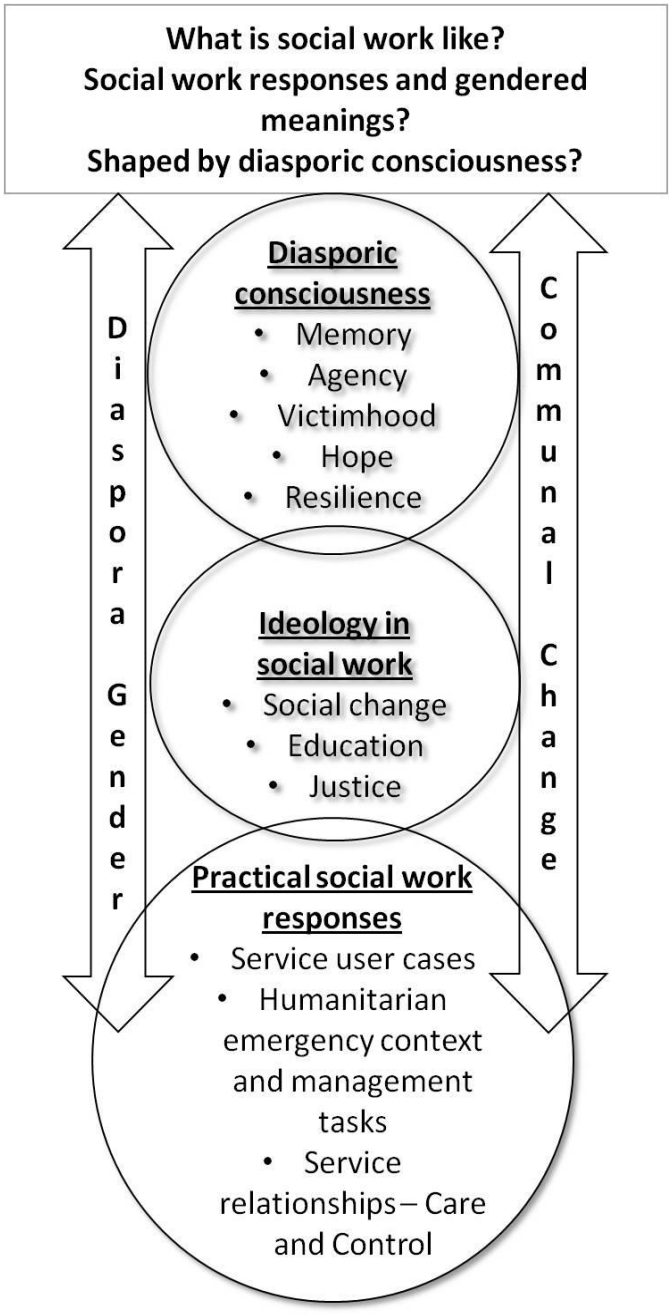

Figure 1.

4.6. Further ethical considerations

In the initial phase of the research process, while still in Finland, I came across with Mayssoun Sukarieh and Stuart Tannock´s (2012) article about Shatila camp as an over-researched community with some serious ethical concerns for researchers engaging in studies with vulnerable communities such as the exile population in Shatila. In the worst case scenario, the researchers may exploit the informants by bribing, empty promises for social change, victimizing and over all for their own selfish purposes and interests. Sukarieh and Tannock argue that the researchers should acknowledge their impact on the lives of their informants and the neighborhood as a whole and, moreover, and only by paying *critically reflective attention to the positioning of researchers, research projects, research practices and research institutions within local, regional, national and global structures and processes of power, identity, inequality, interest and control can the problems of over-research and over-researched communities begin to be understood and addressed.* (Ibid. 2012, 507.) The most vigorous ethical contradictions of my theses lie within these words. Even though, I have chosen theoretical and methodological approaches that recognize the significance of human agency and subjectivity as well as the inherent power imbalances and goal for social change, the research topic is chosen by me, according to my own interests and purposes for graduating university. I have attempted to acknowledge my informants own agency in research interactions and in the knowledge production process, yet, the objectives of social change or empowerment per se are ambivalent as they seem more like romanticized ideas than truly achievable objectives of this study. However, more than anything the choices made during this study constitute my epistemological stand and are an integral part of my interpretation practice.

Nonetheless, the conversation and interview situations with my informant families and social workers are worth another round of a reflection from the ethical point of view. Regardless that I have focused my research interest towards the social work practice rather than the camp residents´ suffering narratives, I have had to consider some sensitive and personal information about my informants´ lives, naturally as a part of understanding the social work cases and the practice itself. During all the family visits, the social workers have introduced me and my interest in asking personal information about their family situations for the sake of researching social work by BAS. I have told my informants that all the recognizable information will be hidden and that I would like to know if I am intruding with my questions

or making them uncomfortable. Social worker 1, who had a long experience of facilitating interviews, as a gate opener, had a custom of asking the interviewee mothers what they thought of my visit and also if they wanted to ask any questions from me, which I adopted as an important ethical consideration but probably would have not realized it on my own. Thus, I was feeling happy to receive also feedback from the mothers, I was often invited over again and in all the cases, they claimed to have enjoyed my visit and our mutual conversation along with the social worker. However, during the analysis phase I began to see how my informants had exerted their own agency and interest in the interview situations, even though perhaps feeling obligated and inferior to accept me because the social workers had asked for permission and most of my informant mothers´ children were sponsored by BAS. There were also times that I visited families surprisingly because of the social worker´s surprise visit and was asked permission to enter only at the door, which made me feel slightly uncomfortable and cautious of what I could have asked.

In addition, the recorded interview settings as well as the informal conversations ethically puzzled me because of the language barriers and if I was ought to draw inaccurate conclusions because of misunderstandings or the power and control elements in the settings. For instance, I was asking questions from the mothers about the relationship with their social worker, not only during the presence of the social worker but also translated by the social worker. I discussed the issue and the possibility to use a neutral translator with the social workers but we came to the conclusion that the interviewees would feel more comfortable with the social worker translating the interviews. Without directs words, I sensed that the social workers did not like the idea or did not understand why it would have been necessary. They did not see any reason why the mothers would have not been able to speak openly about their experiences and feelings relating to the social workers or BAS´s activities, and personally I felt obligated to act on their terms. Now thinking back of it, the presence of the social workers was necessary to discuss the intimate family issues for the sake of trust, even though it might have affected the directions of conversations, given answers as well as, my insights. This was a condition or a pit fall in my study design but I have tried to reflect it on my analysis and understand beyond what directly have been said and searched for nonliteral meanings constructed in certain time, place and conditions, thus, placing the emphasis on "*the situation-bound nature of discourse*" in the analysis (Alasuutari 1995, 69).

Another ethically dubious aspect of my study concerns substance, quantity and accuracy of my written fieldnotes, particularly important data source. My methodological understanding

and knowledge of ethnographic technics were shallow at the time of fieldwork, and I experienced writing fieldnotes stressful and challenging as well as feeling disorientated with my observations as I have mentioned already in this study. Thus, there is a risk of inaccuracy in my field observations as I had to review and rewrite them when I was already back in Finland. However, I have tried by reflective work and writing to put my empirical claims under the scan of, along what Ben Agger (1991) would call *"rigorous self-reflection and self-criticism"* (quoted in Kleinman & Copp 1993,111) and reveal my troubling feelings and subjectivity which is described by Sheryl Kleinman and Martha Coop (1993,111) as new professionalism, requested in ethnographic research. I could not help feeling wanting to go back to the field and doing everything again, this time "better", yet, I have come to conclude that most of all, "doing ethnography" has been a learning experience and that like in all research, "*the ethnographer may publish a wrong or inaccurate account*" (Thomas 1993, 39) thus, I am realizing this risk as an ethical consideration for the study. Many of the situations in field as well as my data collection methods were perhaps ethically worth of questioning if caved deep, yet, I believe the importance here too is how the information, my data, is used and analyzed.

I have disguised all the personal data of my informant mothers and the interview recordings were deleted after transcription. Both of the data sources are saved on my computer and printed out for thematic analysis but will be deleted and disposed after the completed evaluation of my theses. Moreover, the ethicality in this study is based on my efforts on reflective work as well as my interpretation practice and morals relating to what I am ought to say about what I have seen, and why, yet, even this has not been straightforward process. Jim Thomas (1993, 62) warns about "traps" in practicing critical ethnography, especially during the analysis and writing phase as the researcher´s passion for the topic may result in seeing only what serves our purposes, thus imposing meanings on data, or exaggerated claims, clichés, overgeneralization and distorted conclusions. In other words, favoring passion before science (Ibid. 1993, 63). To my best ability, I have tried to illustrate the connections between the empirical insights and theoretical discourses, and merging the links to my field observations and interview quotes. Nevertheless, the interpretation process, no doubt, has been challenging, while seeking a middle course between emotions - science, criticisms - exaggeration, advocacy - clichés, and subjectivity – objectivity.

5 Diaspora, gender and social work in Shatila

5.1 Changing social relations and increasing insecurity in the camp

Shatila camp was established by the Red Cross in 1949 supposedly as a temporary camp to accommodate Palestinian refugees until the return to Palestine was possible. Its original inhabitants came from the northern villages of Palestine such as Akka, Amka Haifa and Yafa after the 1948 war and first settled in tents in the southern area of Beirut. Now, after 67 years of exile, Shatila has transformed into one square kilometer shattered neighborhood. According to UNRWA, the Shatila camp has more than 9,842 registered Palestinian refugees. Although, this figure does not represent the reality of the demographics of the camp as there are unknown amount of unregistered refugees by UNRWA, and other nationalities such as Syrians, Lebanese and Egyptian and Sri Lankan migrant workers living in the camp. The social workers by BAS estimated that the Syrian refugee influx has doubled the camp population to 24,000 people. However, there seem to be is a lack of sufficient statistics on the demographics of the camp (Sukarieh & Tannock 2012, 497-498; NISCVT 2012; UNRWA.) Regardless, we are talking about an overcrowded urban slum in the southern neighborhoods of Beirut that has over seeded its capacity to accommodate the increasing population.

From the beginning of my field work, I was curious to explore how the Palestinian community in Shatila had recovered after years of conflict, and how the past experiences of trauma and losses were reflecting on everyday life in the camp. I figured that by bringing up the past, I could better understand the social reality where families in the camp were currently living and the circumstances, the individual and societal dimensions of suffering that social work was relating to. Soon enough, I noticed that the social workers and many of the mothers I was addressing the topic with were remembering life better and safer in the past, regardless of the decades of war. Now, life had gone from "*bad to worse"*.

Before the society in the camp…all the families lived inside the camp and all of them knew each other, they lived like a small village. All of them want to protect each other. Now it´s different, there are so many people from outside in the camp. You know, Palestinian families are few now in the camp. (Social worker 2, interviews.)

Laura: Has the camp life changed from the time when you were a child?

Mother 3: When I was a child it was a war, Israeli invasion, massacre, camp war but it was better than now.

Laura: Why?

Mother 3: That time there were families that they all knew each other and all of them were Palestinian. Now there are so many strangers. Before we sleep at home and let the door open and we didn´t feel afraid, we felt safe. Now we don´t feel safe. (Interviews.)

Most of my interviewees were worried about the increasing population in the camp and, especially, the presence of non-Palestinians. As the previous interview extract of mother 3 indicates, life in the camp is remembered better in the past than currently, regardless of the insecurity and violence that people were facing during the years of conflict. For her, "better life" represents security and trust in the camp, connected to the Palestinian majority population. Many of my informants constructed past as something more comfortable, relaxed and safe, when people still protected and took care of each other. In other words, when the camp was more of a community, at least if understood in its traditional and idealized sense. It appeared to me that neighbors and new arrivals were looked at with suspicion and most of the families were living quite a private life where mostly intimate family relations were maintained. Furthermore, the mothers shared a common concern of the many strangers, outsiders and "bad" people in the camp, who could potentially hurt their children or expose them to bad influences such as drugs, alcohol and violence.

The economic situation is worse than before. Everything is more expensive. The help form the institutions are not enough. There is also a problem between the mother and children. Now the children have many problems, other things affect the children, smoking nargile, drugs, drinking. It wasn't like this before. (Social worker 2, interviews.)

Recently, drug and alcohol usage has been increasing among the youth in the camp and its surrounding areas, especially, among male adolescents, perhaps, as a result of increasing influences and accessibility as well as greater distress related to the changes in the

community life and sense of hopelessness due to the limited opportunities in Lebanon. The parents are increasingly worried about their children to be affected by other youth smoking nargile (water pipe), drinking alcohol and using drugs. As presented previously in this theses, the camp residents tell that these problems did not exist before and the life had become more complex as the camp is hopelessly over-crowded, people are suffering from extreme poverty, the already weak infrastructure is deteriorating and the reconstruction is restrained by the Lebanese government and, moreover, the youth has limited access to work and education which creates frustration about the future prospects.

All of the quotations above are nostalgic reflections of the past before the displacement of the camp refugees and increasing immigration of other nationalities to the camp. During the Lebanese civil war, many had been killed, injured or disappeared, people had lost their homes and displaced in the surrounding neighborhoods. As anthropologist Diana Allan in her ethnography about Palestinian camp refugees in Lebanon (2008, 77) writes, the traditional structures and local attachment in Shatila have weakened since the early decades of Shatila camp. The displacement of the people in the camp during the numerous of attacks, high rates of immigration, the decline of compound households and a growing presence of non-Palestinians have diminished the sense of community and the influence of kin and village alignments (ibid. 2008,77).

With regards to sense of community, social worker 2 evocatively compares early decades of the camp life to a village as a location of security. This is rather revealing comparison about the change in social relations in the camp and the notions relating to it. Village of origin and family networks are at the heart of Palestinian ethnic identity and culture (Knudsen 2005). As Mohamed Dorai (2002) explains too, years of colonization have deterritorialized the Palestinians and the village of origin has become to symbolize the lost territory. Thus, in exile, camps have replaced villages, simultaneously, continuing to fulfill the function of a village by maintaining a moral balance of the individuals and reinforcing Palestinian national identity. The camp as a site of community is a sacred place of memory and a central part of diasporic consciousness. After the forced dispersal from Palestine, perceiving village networks and patrilineal kin became very central way of reconstructing Palestine through memory and ensuring symbolic continuity. (e.g. Dorai 2002; Knudsen 2005.)

In other words, the sense of community and solidarity based on traditional kin and village networks provided security and moral guidance in the early days of Shatila camp. It is worthy to mention here that when PLO was still controlling the camp, the community was

also more of a coherent political entity with similar needs, values and interests. Moreover, people had a united cause – to liberate Palestine. In Shatila, the revolutionary years and nationalist ferment were seen as times of opportunity and hope. However, the liberation movement failed, PLO departed and people were left with growing deprivation. With time, the economic situation has only become worse for the Palestinian families and, furthermore, the political factions and the social and economic networks based on traditional systems of support no longer provide security and control to the same extent of the past. (Allan 2008.)

Lebanon is currently carrying the heavy weight of the economic, political and social spillovers of Syrian conflict. Since 2011, Lebanon has received a growing amount of refugees as result of the war in the neighboring country. The number of refugees is now approaching one million which is 22 percent of the population. Lebanon, that is resource-poor and debt-ridden country with depleted infrastructure and inadequate public services, cannot respond to the alarmingly increasing economic and social stress of the Syrian refugee influx. The refugee problem is expected to impact economic growth, increase poverty and unemployment and to drive Lebanon in deeper public debt. Furthermore, tension and competition has risen among the local communities of scare public resources, insufficient humanitarian assistance and means of livelihood as Syrian refugees are working for cheaper wages in unskilled jobs. (World Bank 2013.) In addition to the economic and social impact of the war, the secreterian tension and division between Sunna and Shia have increased resulting in massive bombings and violent clashes across Lebanon, mainly because of Lebanon´s Hezbollah support for Bashar AL Assad's Shia regime in Syria. It is obvious that the already most vulnerable people in communities like Shatila are struggling the most to meet their needs in the current situation. Many Palestinian refugees in Shatila are concerned about the economic situation and the fact, that everything, such as food, rents and fuel have become more expensive and the salaries are decreasing. Many of my informant families complained how the Syrian refugees are getting the limited jobs as they are willing to work for lower salary. In addition, they are worried about the camp´s capacity to accommodate all the Syrian refugees including Palestinians from Syria that have settled in Shatila since the uprising broke. Majority of the Palestinian refugees in Shatila are dependent on the humanitarian aid and services provided by the local and international NGOs. The Shatila refugee camp has one UNRWA elementary school and one Red Cross healthcare center. According to the social workers, 11 NGOs are currently operating in Shatila from which 8 has kindergartens. In addition, they offer activities for the children, remedial classes and

English classes. Yet, UNRWA is the main source of material relief and education as well as health services for the Palestinians in Lebanon. However, its already scare resources are depleting as the organization is responsible for providing assistance for the Palestinian refugees from Syria, as well as, for the Palestinians in/ from Lebanon.

The Syrian refugees are currently receiving a lot of international humanitarian and media attention because of their poverty, maltreatment and lack of rights in Lebanon. All of the foreign journalists, researchers and members of different NGOs that came to visit Shatila and the BAS center during my fieldwork were especially interested in interviewing and writing about the Palestinian Syrian and Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon and the camp circumstances. It made me wonder if the world had already heard about the protracted Palestinian refugee situation too many times for it to be interesting enough anymore. The Syrian crises, on the other hand, were more current. The director of BAS told me during one of our conversations that unfortunately now, it was not a time to discuss politically about the Palestinian case in Lebanon since all the political and economic focus is concentrated on the Syrian war and the massive refugee influx. For many of the Palestinian families, the Syrian conflict not only mean competition on livelihood but also competition on international and local awareness of their continues struggles. One of social workers by BAS expressed her opinion on the matter by saying that the Syrian problem will pass one day and the refugees will return home but the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon cannot return back home or do they have any rights in Lebanon. The Syrian refugee distress among Palestinian mainstream thinking was understood as temporary and hopeful on the contrary to the Palestinian problem that was constructed as continues and hopeless.

Whereas others seemed to be concerned about the economic and social impact of the Syrian war, others were more afraid of the increasing physical insecurity because of the secretarian violence, repetitive suicide attacks and car bombings in the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as, radicalization of youth and their participation in the war. Many of my informant mothers were worried about their children traveling to schools located outside the camp. Also parents were afraid for themselves, their family members and relatives having to work outside and travel in dangerous neighborhoods. Some mothers told me that they used to visit occasionally outside the camp with children for example by the sea side or parks but the current insecurity prevented them to continue visiting different areas in Beirut or outside the city. The head of the center explained to me that the camp residents feel like being in prison, like they cannot “breathe” or “relax”. This made me understand how life in the

neighborhood was full of boundaries and limitations, to meet the everyday material needs and to feel safe, free and included. The suffocating camp circumstances combined with struggles of livelihood and stress of physical security narrows down the range of human choice and freedom creating anxiety for many.

To conclude, many of the refugee families in Shatila as well as the social workers by BAS were concerned about the increasing physical violence and threat but also about the growing economic deprivation and the change in the community life. For my informants problems in the camp and feelings of insecurity appeared, moreover, to affiliate with the degrading sense of community. Village and family networks still played an important role in life for many as a material and psychological support system, yet, Shatila camp as central place of diasporic consciousness and sense of community has disintegrated since the early days of the camp due to the in and out migration, over crowdedness and the presence of non-Palestinians. Sense of community requires face-to face interaction, emotional connection and shared trust and responsibilities (e.g. Nowell & Boyd, 2014). However the changing camp circumstances have led into feelings of insecurity and suspicion. Disintegration gradually disconnects people from their roots and their traditional networks which raise a question for my theses about how these processes are impacting on and addressed by the social work practice in the community.

5.2 Social work responses by BAS

5.2.1 Orphanage and social hardship family case entries: gendered issues

On many occasions in the field I was sitting down with the social workers and discussing about the family circumstances in a case-type matter. Before visiting the families the social workers often described me a so called profile of the family as background information or explained their work to me through family cases. Therefore, I have decided to illustrate and introduce, in a similar descriptive way, two typical family cases as a part of my analysis and entry to the social work practice. The cases are derived and compressed from my fieldnotes, thus, based on real life stories and circumstances but they are imaginative and directional for my further analysis.

Case 1

Mother Nur lives in Shatila camp in a 2 room apartment with her 3 children, Mohammed 14, Samir 8 and Aisha 4. Her husband suddenly past away three years ago to a heart attack and since that Nur has been taking care of her children by herself. When her husband was still alive, he was supporting the family working as a taxi driver and the family was renting an apartment outside the camp. Since the death of her husband, Nur´s brother in law has paid the rent of the new apartment in the Shatila camp. Nur´s mother and sister also live in Shatila. Her father disappeared during the Sabra and Shatila Massacre in 1982. Nur dropped out of school at an age of 16 when she got married to her husband. She hasn´t got any professional training and doesn´t know what kind of job she could do or where to find work. In addition, her husband's family wishes that she stays at home and takes care of her children. Nur has diabetes and her sons Mohammed and Samir have asthma. The medical costs cause stress for Nur. She receives sponsorship from BAS for all of her children which are 60 USD a month. Mohammed and Samir are also sponsored by another Lebanese institution that supports orphans. Sometimes her uncle, who lives in Denmark, sends money for the family, especially, during the Ramadan month. In addition, the family receives UNRWA`s material relief once in three months, such as rice, flour and oil. The monthly income for the family is around 100 USD. Aisha goes to BAS´s kindergarten and Mohammed and Samir are at UNRWA elementary school. Samir is getting good grades at school and he comes for remedial classes at BAS center after schooldays. He also enjoys BAS´s children´s activities on Fridays such as drawing. Mohammed on the other hand suffers from learning difficulties and motivation problems. He was held back for two grades and he plans dropping the school and finding work.

Case 2:

Mustafa and Nadine are parents of 4 children, Omar 6, Ahsan 10, Farah 15 and Bilal 16. The family lives in the Sabra neighborhood next to the Shatila camp where they rent a 2 room apartment costing 230USD per month. The apartment hasn't got any electricity nor daylight and the windows and ceiling are leaking. Father Mustafa paralyzed 3 years ago on the left side of his body causing physical disability and thus, cannot work as a carpenter anymore. Mother Nadine works occasionally as a cleaning lady while her children are at school, earning around 200USD per month, depending on how much work she has work for each month. BAS sponsors all of the four children. The oldest son Bilal has a developmental disability and thus, goes to a Lebanese private school for children with special needs. Luckily Bilal receives of sponsorship from another institution so the family is free of Bilal´s school fees. Rests of the children are at UNRWA school. Nadine is tired of all the work she has in the house with the children and helping her husband as well as, the work she does outside the home. She feels tires and depressed because of her family situation. Nadine has high blood pressure and her two youngest children suffer from anemia. The money is not enough to cover all the medical costs and the rent is expensive. They receive UNRWA´s material relief once in three month and sometimes she borrows money from her relatives and neighbors. She also worries for her son Bilal and his future possibilities. After secondary school, Nadine hopes that Farah would marry and Omar and Ahsan would carry on doing well at school and finding a good job in the future.

Both of the family cases presented above illustrate typical family situations that social work by BAS is dealing with. Poverty and scarce resources are the main problems for all of my informant families, as well as, the numerous of physical and mental health issues, poor housing conditions, and the children´s education problems. When discussing poor households among Palestinian refugees, in general, three categories can be named: (i) families with the main earner unable to work (poorest), (ii) elderly- or female-headed households (less poor), and (iii) families with one working member with many dependents (the largest group of the poor) (Brynen & El-Rifai 2007, 42). BAS´s social work is mainly concerned with the first and second categories of camp refugees in Lebanon that are, to remind, the most impoverished group among the Palestinian refugee population in the whole Arab region. Social workers by BAS have divided their service users into two case types: orphanage and social hardship families where the father as the main provider for the family had either past away, gotten ill or injured. Both of the service user cases touch upon a whole range of gendered issues relating to poverty and social problems, affecting the mothers and fathers of the families in different ways, according to their gender roles and identities.

Generally to say, all the determinants of poverty: unemployment, the lack of education and decision making power, as well as, freedom of choice are the highest among Palestinian camp refugee women in Lebanon (Chaaban & al. 2010, 11). Yet, by looking at the practical realities of my informants' everyday lives and hearing their own stories, the certain feminist notions and assumptions of women´s role and subordination seems a little simplistic in describing the diversity of experiences of my informants. It appeared to me that in the social work case families, mothers had a major role in organizing the family life, providing, caring and taking responsibility in household matters. After illness, injury or death of a husband, many of my informant mothers had to expand their role from the domestic sphere into the public and find alternative ways and connections to support their families. Whereas for others, the confusion of traditional gender-based roles and norms meant increased independence, agency and control in life, for others it, exclusively or simultaneously, created stress and anxiety.

Laura: How did your life change after the death of your husband?

Mother 2: The life became harder because I had to take the responsibility for the mother and father at the same time. I cannot work because my children are young.

Social worker 3: I knew the father and he was taking all the responsibility before the death but after the mother took over. The father was controlling everything.

Social worker 1: Her case is better than the social hardship cases. She found out that many institutions help her.

Mother 2: I feel that my life is now somehow normal. There is only one problem with Ali, because he couldn´t continue with remedial classes and he needs a private teacher because he is very slow and he has some concentration problems. I found a teacher now and when I get the financial aid, I´ll give it to the teacher. (Orphanage family, interviews.)

Laura: How would you describe your life currently?

Mother 5: Good, normal, I am used to it. My life is alone, without any people. It is secured situation for the children. They are having excellent marks....The main thing are my children. When they become older they will marry and then I can marry again too...I live a good life. We have fun and we have a daily program for the children when they come from school. I live a private life. I just say good morning to neighbors but no more. I don't want more. I only visit my family. (Orphanage family, interviews.)

Mother 1: My husband and father tell me what to do. I have no personality or freedom. Only to deliver babies, to cook, to take care of the house. Other things are not my responsibility...I feel depressed because I have no option. When I was single, it was the same way. When I married it was the same way. I feel like I have to walk on a straight line and I cannot cross it. I have to do everything, to take care of everything in the house and outside, all the things. (Social hardship case, interviews.)

The assertions above illustrates how many mothers had a dual pressure to ensure the livelihood for their families but also respectively perform their role as a mother and care giver. Most of the Palestinian refugee women were defined first and foremost according to their family status: as mothers, wives and daughters, however, many had to adjust to their new social situation after the death or illness of the father in the family. Many mothers had to seek for employment opportunities or other means of livelihood such as financial aid and lends outside home, concurrently, performing excessive load of unpaid care work in the family. Accordingly, gendered division of labor, by which women are responsible of different tasks than men, referring either to the gender division of household labor or the gender segregation in the paid labor market (e.g. Ferree 1990), was determining the ways in

which family life, tasks and household income was organized and divided in the informant families as well as employment opportunities outside the domestic sphere. Some mothers were responsible for both, taking care of the children and the household and in addition to that, earning income in the paid labor market in gender specific, irregular, low paid jobs such as cleaner or nannies. Moreover, the informant women´s gendered roles as mothers and wives played out as an emotional burden for many, especially for those who did not feel being in control or active participants in their own lives. Also, the worry and feelings of incapability, related to the wellbeing of children and their needs, was often overwhelming, creating stress and anxiety under the stains of poverty because of the responsibility of child care. Many fathers were under a lot of stress and pressure too to execute their gender roles based on the constructs of hegemonic masculinity whose premise is that men are the breadwinners of the family. The social worker´s by BAS told me that the situation for men was not easy either as they were struggling finding jobs or totally incapable of working and, thus, unable to take care of their families. Generally to say, men could potentially find jobs in low paid and low skilled jobs in agriculture, construction or as shop keepers. Sometimes, frustration under traditional gender roles erupted in a form of family arguments, conflicts and violence.

In both type of family cases, mothers were managing the humanitarian aid and service networks as well as the family connection and support systems locally and transnationally. Many of the mothers were maintaining connections, visiting, participating activities and responding to demands of different political factions such as PLO and Hamas for humanitarian assistance in addition to non-political humanitarian organizations such as BAS and UNRWA in order to receive sponsoring, assistance and services. Sometimes lending systems and gift exchange were arranged among the neighbors, and families would find help from individual charity people. In the Palestinian society, family is the primary unit in life for many women around which the lives are organized, offering also protection, material security and emotional support (Peteet 2000, 445). In Shatila, family network were not only maintained locally but also often transnationally as many had family members residing abroad. The extent to which these connections provided material or emotional support for my informant families varied individually, yet, many were receiving some sort of material support on occasional basis, for example during birthdays or religious holidays or for specific purposes such as school fees or even for covering day to day expenses such as rents. Whereas for many, family was the primary support system, equally, the family could unable

women to pursue education and employment, and prevent them from choosing their own marital partners or discourage their own choices. It was not rare that some women would feel pressure from the family, whether from her natal family or husband's family, to stay home with the children even though the mother herself would feel capable of managing both, child care and paid work the way that would not harmfully affect the children. Many women were, never the less, able to establish connections and means of livelihood to support their families, regardless of the fact that paid labor work was not desired, available or it was not sufficient enough in covering the costs of everyday expenses.

In the study of female-headed households, it is commonly suspected that female headed households are more vulnerable to risk, economically less viable and socially less connected and integrated (e.g. Barros et. all 1997; Buvinic & Gupta 1997). However, the social work orphanage cases illustrate that this was not totally the case among the Palestinian social work service users in Shatila but, instead, the humanitarian service and family networks provided security, making the female headed households generally less disadvantaged than the social hardship cases. These support networks also, indicated that women were socially integrated and connected. I noticed that the mothers of the orphanage families were rarely complaining about their current situation but rather putting all of their focus on children. Their lives were organized around children´s school schedules and daily routines. Many told me that they feel good about being in control of all of the issues relating to the children. The life was rather simple for many but they felt that the support they received from different organizations and/or family support were enough to meet their basic needs. Yet, the support was inevitable to survive.

The stress and concerns of life were related often either, scarce resources or/and to the education and health of children, never the less, these families were better off than many of the social hardship cases which seemed more complex through the eyes of social work because of their even poorer economic situation. On several occasions, the social workers by BAS reminded me that the situation for the orphanage families (female-headed households) were actually better than for the social hardship cases where the father was still alive. Social hardship families didn't have enough aid, services and support available, fathers weren't able to find work, medical costs and rents were high and living conditions were deteriorating. Many felt that their dreams and hopes in life had crashed after the husband had gotten ill or injured and couldn't work. The family sizes were usually big and the parents were worried how to respond to the growing needs and demands of their children, from the very basic

needs such as healthy food and clothes to school fees. BAS had taken under its sponsorship families that had both of the parents alive after noticing how little help and support in the humanitarian field was available for the families where fathers were expected to provide and support for their own families. Yet, it was an impossible duty to deliver because of the discriminatory labor laws, competition in the labor market, combined with health problems and disabilities that many of the Palestinians were suffering from; hence, many of the families were crucially dependent on humanitarian aid in order to fulfill their basic livelihood. On the one hand, many humanitarian organizations had been established to sponsor the orphanage families after the years of Lebanese wars as many men were either killed or disappeared. For the families where the father was still alive, however, was not much help available. Therefore, BAS was one of the rare organizations for the Palestinian refugees that considered also so called social hardship cases. Yet, those were the families, in deed, the very vulnerable once to deal with risks and adversity in life.

As the typical social work case entries in the beginning of this chapter show, almost all of the families had members with some sort of heath or education problems. These are common issues among all Palestinian refugee population in general, yet, the social work service users´ situations were the hardest of the hard, resulting in impossible situations without adequate resources. Particularly, those families, who had children with mental and physical disabilities, were the most vulnerable because there were not enough services available for the children with special needs. Without examining in detailed, it is important to mention that the social problems among the Palestinian families such as educational issues had a strong gender dimension. Young women were generally expected to marry and start a family rather than achieving profession and become employed, whereas, boys were wished to succeed at school and find a good job in order to support his family. Many mothers themselves had married at an early age and dropped out of school, and some were also illiterate and, therefore, valuing education for their daughters as well, and some had high expectations and dreams for their daughters to complete university studies. All of the mothers wanted her children to do well at school, whether boys or girls, but the expectations varied for some mothers according to gender and their economic status after basic education. Also, the problem of early marriages was still fairly common among the families.

5.2.2 Humanitarian emergency context

As discussed in the previous analysis chapter, the main concerns of the social work service user families are relating to income, housing, health, education and family relationships, hence, organizing social work practice around these issues. Social workers by BAS have an outlining principle in their work to categorize and prioritize the problems in the families. The service users situations and problems were often complex and intertwined but the social work practice principle was to sort of recognize the most urgent problem in the family and try to find solution for it. Social workers by BAS knew that they could not help with all the problems with the little resources and services available for the Palestinian families; yet, they were trying their best to assist with the most acute crises. The problem categories were directly connected to the Palestinian camp refugees´ humanitarian emergency context where focus had been especially orientated in problems concerning unemployment, poor housing and health conditions as well as children´s educational problems, as a result, framing the social work practice tasks to respond these issues.

Social work responses dealing with income related issues in the service user families were above direct financial aid through the sponsorship-program. The actual financial aid was important for many assisting covering day to day expenses but it was not solely, even close, sufficient enough as a family income. Social workers by BAS were all well connected in the community and familiar with the humanitarian service field and different organization that could potentially provide financial assistance or services for the families if BAS´s support was not able to help or was not sufficient enough. As a result, social workers could provide viable information and guidance for the families at a face of an emergency.

It is important to mention here that the social workers offered their advices and guidance also to families who were not sponsored if they came to visit the center for help. Furthermore, social workers held connections to a network of charity people who would on an occasional basis offer contributions to the families in most need, especially during the religious holidays as it was traditional custom in the Muslim culture. Social workers´ own friends and family members were also part of these support networks. In addition, BAS center in the Shatila camp had its own charity box where, for example, visitors could put money into and the social workers would decide how the money was distributed. For instance, the charity contributions were used to organize flexible income arrangements for

the families such as loans for kindergarten fees and medical costs or even offer financial aid for acute situations like medical surgeries. Social workers utilized their best all their connections in the community to figure out employment and training opportunities for the families. Sometimes, social workers had arranged actual jobs or, for example, helped families to set up a little shop by borrowing startup money as well as offered voluntary work and trainings at the BAS center for women working with kindergarten children.

Like in all social work, financial assistance was not given away without reservations though and even demands on how the money was used in the families. Social workers had often clear conception about where and how the financial aid should be utilized so that it would benefit the child and the family the best way possible.

Laura: How was the family situation before reaching over to BAS?

Social worker1: Her husband became sick in 2005. She went to many institutions to ask help but all said that you are a Palestinian, we cannot help you, and you should go to UNRWA or Palestinian institutions. That time he (the husband) couldn't work. Some charity people told her that you can go to BAS, maybe they can help you. That time she was working as a cleaner in a kindergarten. When she came to us, she forgot that we ask for the help a report for her husband because he is alive. We cannot sponsor the family if we don't have the documents. She brought all the documents about the kids and husband. No person supports the family except the mother but she has the minimum salary. 200 000 LBP and was renting a house for 150 000 LBP. Also if any family needed a cleaner, she would clean. During that time she was having 3 children. I remember that house, it had two room, it was not healthy, and children have asthma, no furniture, nothing. Me and the head of the center visited the house.

They were lucky to get a sponsorship from Malaysia; the sponsor sent 1200 dollars, for each child 400 dollars. They didn't have anything; this happened in 2008. I told her that I will not give you all of the money: husband is sick, all of the children are sick, she is sick. She was buying medicine from the pharmacy; she owned the pharmacy a lot of money. I told her that I will not give you all of the money, what you need for your house. We need beds for the children, and then I told that we have to pay for the pharmacy and we also need some money for the situation of the husband, for medicine. I told her to go buy beds, this one and this one and then I asked her to pay for the pharmacy and the rest I kept and she came monthly to take 50USD for the medicine for the father.

Laura: What did you think of her plan?

Mother 6: I agreed because she advised me. (Interviews.)

In this family case, the social worker had quite straight forward told the mother in the family what to do with the additional remittances she had received from the sponsor for her three children. For years, the social worker had helped the family to manage its family economy, and the mother was trusting on her social workers advices, perhaps, also feeling obliged to do so. Never the less, many of the families´ household income was minimum, inadequate to cover family expenditure, and, thus, strict budget management and often flexible and adjusted solutions such as lending from the community members were needed. Social workers had a major role in facilitating these connections, for example with family members, landlords, shop keepers and so on. All in all, the objective was to achieve better out comes for the children, the social workers were pushing boundaries to find solutions and reach that objective.

Social work responses dealing with children´s educational problems were one of the most important missions for the social work practice by BAS. Children´s school motivation problems, learning difficulties, hyperactivity and developmental disabilities are common issues among the camp refugees, severely hampering children´s cognitive development and, furthermore, future employment opportunities and possibilities for independent life. Most of the educational problems arise from a vicious circle of inadequate school, home and environmental conditions. UNRWA´s education system, camp circumstances, poor nutrition and environmental health problems, cultural attitudes and the sense of hopelessness among the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, to name few, were the explanatory factors, thus, framing the context of social work practice concerning education of the Palestinian children.

BAS had organized specific educational programs such as remedial classes and a group for school drop-out girls to assist student in order to achieve expected competences and basic knowledge of literacy and numeracy so that the children could keep up with the curriculum and finish basic education. Besides designed educational programs, BAS´s Family Guidance Center was offering psychological assessment and support for children with special needs. Social workers, in particular, were in an important role in detecting possible cognitive disorders among children and directing families toward the appropriate care at the Family Guidance Center or other services. Frequently, social workers spoke for the importance of education to the families and encouraged children to study hard and succeed at school as well as to build up dreams of better future and desired jobs. With cases of school drop-outs,

the social worker pushed youth to continue on at training centers in order to learn a job. The motivational work was not an easy task to deliver because of the harsh reality of high unemployment and limited possibilities that the youth was well aware of, yet the success stories of peers bred hope.

Similarly, Social workers by BAS offered guidance for the family members concerning their health situation. The guidance varied from tips about good doctors, medical services and financial assistance to more of an educational counseling about health especially, concerning women´s health issues. Through the reproductive health project, besides clinic services, sessions were arranged to discuss gender questions, violence and sexual health. Also, social workers were organizing special meetings regularly at the center to discuss different gender specific topics, depending on the interests of the mothers and fathers. Social workers invited parents to the sessions and consistently reminded the families how important their participation and the information that they were receiving was.

Laura: What do you think about the activities?

Mother 4: I feel I benefitted from the activities…about teenagers, about health and session about how to relax, many subjects.. I didn't know anything about these subjects. I am a good cook so I was helping as a volunteer to teach other mothers how to cook. Last year there was an Italian cook who thought us how to make macaroni. I was happy when they organized a party and a picnic for mother´s day. Last year we didn't go because the situation is not safe..And every year we have a marathon. Samir ran the marathon. Samir was sad because he missed the party (of the marathon) because he forgot to come.

Social worker 2: He is not sponsored by BAS but he likes to go to the center and share the activities. (Interviews.)

All my informant mothers felt that they had benefited from the activities and educational meetings at the BAS center. Especially, the topics relating to family and marriage relationships as well as raising children were experienced important and interesting. Also many felt that they were learning new facts about health, nutrition, environmental conditions and social questions in the community. Thus, even though the activities at the center for mothers were sort of obligatory in order for them to receive the monthly sponsorship, all of the mothers I met truly seemed to have enjoyed the activities and some felt even happy to volunteer and help organizing events and activities with the social workers. The feelings of relaxation and fun that the activities offered were significant in their own right at hardships

of everyday life. The activities, as well as, the educational sessions were meant to touch upon common and shared issues of the mothers in the community and bring them together to discuss about them. The main agenda was educational; to improve parenting, family relationships, home and health conditions for the children, as well as to deliver appropriate responses for women´s needs and issues in particular.

> *My situation became better after BAS began sponsoring my family. BAS gives support to me by money, social support, psychological support, to help me how to be with my children and husband. The social worker ables my situation. Also she encourages me to work outside but teaches me how to take care of my children at the same time. Years ago when he (husband) was sick, he stayed nine years in bed, he was always sick, didn´t go out. The situation in our family was very sad, and the situation was really sad for the children. They went to the center to play. Any time I feel there is a problem with the children I go to the center to speak to the social worker. (Mother 3, Interviews.)*

Like in mother 3 case, social workers were supporting and assisting many mothers to adjust to their social situation in the face of adversity and taking care of the families at most risk. The social workers were responding to different kind of life patterns; female-headed households, working mothers and divorced and remarried families, thus having to take account differential experiences of womanhood. Importantly, many mothers felt that the social worker gave her emotional and conversational help, besides, money, advices and guidance, as well as, gave an opportunity for relaxation by arranging parties, activities and group discussions about shared interests and experiences, In this sense, social work by BAS was working towards the emotional well-being of the mothers. Social workers by BAS helped mothers to cope with issues in their everyday lives, deal with their family relationships and solve personal and family problems. Their aim was also to utilize the community and family resources and networks in the helping process. However, the social workers were particularly concerned about the increasing mental health problems in the families (among adults and children), making the social workers often feel incapable to help because not enough mental health services were available for the families, besides BAS´ family guidance center.

5.2.3. Management tasks and the ideal of ´professionalism´

On a regularly basis, approximately once a month, the social worker´s by BAS visited families under the sponsorship program, evaluated the current situation of the family and wrote a report based on the problem categories, discussed previously, to their filing system. This was one of their management responsibilities to inform their supervisor the time that was spent and what had been done as well as to justify their work and the reasons behind it to the sponsors who were sending monthly money for the families. Yearly, social worker´s wrote a report for the sponsors locally and abroad to keep them updated in their sponsor children's family situations. In addition, the social workers were monitoring and reporting about all the activities, programs, and visitors of the Shatila center. Accordingly, above individual responsibilities in supporting and visiting their services user families and trying to help with problems in the families, a lot of time was used on management tasks, perhaps, in order to achieve greater accountability and efficiency. Yet, the core of the social work practice was to help the families under the sponsorship program and organize activities in the center for the families in the camp and the surrounding neighborhoods.

The supervisor of all BAS´s social workers told me during one of our meetings that the next training topics for the social workers are questions of professionalism and management. Efficiency and accountability was considered important area of development and the management procedures in the Western social work were thought of something to learn from and implement to the social work practice in the camps. In addition, the management level of the organization was somewhat concerned about the nature or, moreover, the level of neutrality of the social workers in their service relationships with the families as occasionally, social workers were intervening in families´ private issues in a kind of too personal matter, expressing straight forward personal opinions and getting too close with the families. The professional standard generally adopted in the social work service delivery is to maintain neutral, to offer unbiased services. Within expected neutrality in social worker´s many roles, positive valuations of care such as friendships do not have place. Thus, the dual relationship of friend and professional is understood antiethical and against the standards of expertise. However, especially from the postmodernist stand point, care, friendships and expertise operate in a supplementary way. (Dybicz 2012, 278.) Through my eyes, the social workers and the mothers relationships seemed friendly and the interaction was direct and natural as far as I could interpret form the gestures, body language and conversation topics as

well as from the informants own telling. In other words, the service felt warm, honest and soulful, something that was apart and unusual from the Finnish social work service context, yet is was seen problematic by the organization's management level as that kind of dual relationships contradicted with the social work expertise discourse and the notion of professionalism.

In addition to organizational responsibilities, the management work itself contained elements of advocacy work for the well-being of families by addressing the material needs of the poor families and the community to the individual sponsors and the different non-governmental organizations sending financial assistance to BAS. The objective was to improve housing, health and education standards and other practical aspects important for the family well-being among the Palestinian refugee community.

5.2.3 Family centered work: Gendered expectations and social control

According to Kate Morris (2002, 126) the notions of family-based social work have traditionally concentrated on professional intervention and achieving change in family dynamics that are perceived to be inadequate or appropriate, thereby enabling better care for children. I suggest that this presumption applies as a fundamental grounding on social work by BAS. The so called dysfunctions of the families were directly connected to the structural power imbalances of the Lebanese society, creating limited possibilities for the Palestinian families, further resulting in poverty combined with unemployment, lack of education and poor environmental health conditions. For the wellbeing of children and the future generation of Palestinian population, social workers by BAS were tackling theses developmental problems affecting families to ensure safer environment for the children´s upbringing in order for them to reach their full potential in development. Without deliberate action to protect poor families and children, negative effects of poverty could be passed on to future generations of Palestinians.

On the individual level though, first and foremost, families´ wellbeing was approached through mothers and their roles as carers. The social workers were maintaining relationships with fathers too and organizing father´s meetings to discuss, for instance, social concerns such as unemployment and increasing immigration in the camp. Yet, because of the mother's role in the domestic sphere as care givers, family issues and child care were mainly considered as women´s domain and a common ground for female social workers and

mothers and further their relationship. The female gender identities based on feminine attributes and roles were clearly influencing the social work practice. The mothers were expected to perform certain standards of "good motherhood" that was controlled by the social workers. In the scholarly debates about social work with families, social work practice is understood to be shaped by cultural constructs of good parenting and child well-being. Similarly, in the gender discourses, the concept of motherhood is approached through socially constructed values, norms and meanings that create expectations for mothers and maintain conceptions of "good" or "right" mothers. (Berg 2008.) The notion of "good mother" is, hence, embedded in culture and belief systems, impacting the practices and strategies working with families.

She needs financial support, only money is problem. She is acceptable, a good lady. She doesn't take anything for herself, everything for the children. She prefers her children first. Not her. (Social worker 3, interviews.)

I always tell her to be strong and face the problems in good way. She is strong woman but she could have not continued her life without us because she was facing many problems. (Social worker 1, interviews.)

Laura: How would you describe your relationship to the BAS center and to the social workers?

Mother 1: Of course I feel the same like for my family, especially towards Social worker 3 but sometimes I am nervous about her because she always says you must do this, you must that and if I cannot do it. Like my family… But I feel more confident now than before.

I invited her many times but she has been absent (from women´s group sessions) and I will ask why you don't come, you must be with the group because she will gain confidence. This group is for them who have same issues in the family than her, lots of duties.(Interviews.)

Laura: how would you describe the relationship between you two?

Mother 6: Good.

Social worker 1: Are you scared of me?

Mother 6: hahaha I always tell to my children that please help me (to clean) or she (social worker 1) will come. (Interviews.)

On several occasions, the social workers constructed categories of "strong" and "good" mothers versus the "week" once while discussing the family cases. These categorizations were not perhaps meant as labeling and downright but because of the language barriers between English and Arabic, these exhaustive classifications were used to describe the mothers and their duties in the families. The strong and good mothers were the once who kept their house clean and tidy, cooked well and healthy, dedicated themselves to the children and their wellbeing and participated all the activities that BAS was organizing. The strength of mothers referred to their capability to adjust to their hard social situation and control, care and provide for their children as well as staying confident, resourceful and hopeful for better future. The so called "weak" mothers, on the contrary, were lacking of self-confidence and often felt over-whelmed in the face of hardships. These mothers often struggled also with household duties and raising and "controlling" their children. It did not mean that the "weak" mothers were equally "bad" mothers but they needed more support and guidance. It appeared to me, thus, that the specific, cultural context bound definition for a good mother implied for caring, loving and protecting but also humble, devoted and adjustable mother. The hard conditions of everyday life required resilience and strength to survive and the mothers were expected to remain strong and unselfish for their children and keep them in curb.

While I was visiting the families, one of the social workers repeatedly told me that she never asked the family permission or noted before her monthly visits. In her opinion, in this way she could better see what was the actual situation in home, if everything in the house was for example clean and organized. All of the mother in the families that I visited had accepted this and did not find it intruding or disrespectful or did not express it, at least. Never the less, as an example, it indicates gendered social control elements in the practice. Social workers were entering families' private life with certain expectations and conditions justified by children's best interests and the fact that families were receiving monthly financial assistance from the organization. Most often, these expectations were targeting especially women in the households and their roles as carers and with responsibilities in socialization and education and household duties. There can be named some common attributes considered cross-cultural relating to children's wellbeing such as fulfillment of basic needs, love, care and protection, social interaction as well as family networks (e.g. Berg 2008, 41). The social workers were touching all of these issues in their daily practice with families and yet,

simultaneously functioning as agents of social control telling service user families often straight forward what to do, deciding which families get access to resources and guiding how family tasks, income and networks were organized.

According to Eileen Gambrill`s (2001) account, social work profession is an authority-based practice as criterion for practice are often based on status justified assumptions like "trust me" or "we know best" rather than scientific evidence on what works or what should be done. Leaning on Gambrill´s argument, I perceived social workers and service user families' relationship hierarchical on the grounds of social worker´s authorial status and knowledge base. Like in all social work, guidance and advices are often only kind of ideas, yet, more valuable or accountable because of the control and knowledge status. By no means, I argue that the social workers advices and guidance were not needed, important or valid, moreover, my purpose is to point out the different dimensions of social workers and service users relationships and the control element inherent.

> *Social worker 1: Mohammed went to our kindergarten and we let her (the mother) to pay step by step. I told her to stop delivering (babies) because of the sickness (of the father)..I asked if she is taking any awareness when she sleeps with her husband. Maybe, she will be infected...*
>
> *One Japanese group wanted to stay 24 hours in the house in the camp and I brought them to this family. They lived in the other house. At the end, they gave 500usd and then I told them what you can do because they always need that. Our work is like this.*
>
> *Father: It's good to find somebody to advice. Qur'an says that it is good to find somebody to advice you. (Interviews.)*

This interview extract shows how the social worker had given important and viable advices relating to family planning and sexual health as well as enabled additional income for the family, further guiding income consumption. Yet, at the same time, it indicates how meaningful the social workers role was in the service users´ family life as helper, adviser, educator and controller, as well as, how respectfully the family was embracing their social workers efforts, even showing signs of dependency. Consequently, despite having seemingly service user families 'best interests at heart, social workers exerted control and authority as well.

5.2.4 Woman to woman: Care, trust and friendships

From the beginning of the sponsoring program, service user families knew what was expected from them in order for them to receive monthly sponsoring; participation in activities, allowing the visits of social workers, receiving visitors in the camp and keeping occasionally contact with the sponsors, especially by children´s letters. The social workers, on the one hand, promised to take care and help the families the best way they could. Thus, the principles of relationship were already set in the beginning of sponsoring, however, it took a lot of time and trust to build the relationship between the social workers and service users for the change to occur in the family situation.

Laura: How would you describe your relationship with your social worker?

Mother 3: I feel like she is my sister and the mother to my children, because my sister doesn't understand me like she understands me.(Interviews.)

Mother 5: With any problem, I trusts her and everything that happens I am used to go and talk with her. (Interviews.)

Laura: How is it to create a new relationship with the family?

Social worker 2: by visiting, that I'm here to give help as I can.

Laura: Do you think they trust you?

Social worker 2: Some need more time to trust but yes they trust usually easily, maybe because we have worked long time, most Palestinian families inside the camp know us. It makes it easier for us. (Interviews.)

All of my informant mothers referred to their social worker as a family member or a friend, somebody who understood them and somebody to even share intimate secrets with. The secrets of mothers were never meant for my ears or anybody outsider´s, for that matter. However, according to the social workers the secrets could relate to intimate questions in the marriage life or in the family/relative relations and raising children. Also feelings of sadness and depression as well as joy and happiness were shared with the family´s social worker. Usually the relationship between the family and the social worker lasted for years until the child had graduated or found a job. Even after sponsoring was finished, and the social workers were participating in major events in some families´ life spans such as births,

weddings, religious holidays, funerals and so forth. As a consequence, if describing the social work-service user relationship, fundamental element was care. Regarding social work and care, Phillip Dybicz (2012, 272) argues that "*the expressions of care – and the accompanying application of social work values via a genuine friendship – are a driving force in the helping process."*I find Dybicz´s account particularly descriptive in examining BAS´s social worker-service user relationship. It is impossible to imagine that trust between the mothers and social workers would have been accomplished without feelings of genuine care and respectful treatment towards the service user families. The social workers constructed themselves as equals to their service user families. Social workers were suffering from the same particular Palestinian refugee problems; the experiences of exile, alienation, discrimination and loss, poor living conditions and physical insecurity, yet, they were generally more educated and had a long experience from the field. Similarly, the shared understanding of issues relating to womanhood and motherhood in the community was a unitive factor creating the basis of the relationship. Thus, I suggest that the social workers care and sympathy towards the service user families as well as the trust based service relationship was derived from the shared past and current experiences of the Palestinian womanhood and exile.

Laura: How did you begin to work with BAS and what was your motivation?

Social worker 2: I began with BAS in 1986. I was a student in the university, first year. I became a volunteer during the camp war. It was that period when the situation was really bad in the camp and it was war and many bombs. It was me and jamile, we worked with families, especially with children in the shelters.

Laura: What motivated you to work as a volunteer?

Social worker 2: Because I see the situation in the camp, I am also from this camp, I have born in this camp and I know this camp. I heard that BAS is an institution to work with children and families that don't have anybody to take care of them. I felt I must go to the center and help in any way I can. (Interviews.)

Social worker 1: About my motivation, maybe you want to know. As I told you I wanted to work in accounting but my Palestinian community and the hardship cases is good for me, I did many trainings and I learnt my way to do the work. These are our Palestinian people and the hardship cases in the community. I looked also how people from outside of our people came and helped us and here I am a Palestinian. It is good to be a social worker, to help my community. The big thing that helped me in the beginning, I did many trainings in the BAS, at the first 1992, 1996. But not only had this training helped me. When you work at the ground it gives the basic information. Like how to solve a problem in the family. This thing you don't take from the university. During the work you can take

your experience from the ground, from the hardship cases in the Palestinian community. (Interviews.)

Social worker 3: I saw the Palestinian families, the hardship cases and I felt I had to work with them. More than I need to be a teacher. I thought it would be better to be social worker than a teacher…when I came to BAS I felt that I could give more services for the Palestinian people. I felt that I wanted to give and not only take, to give my everything to the work and leave my private life aside. Most of us we are still single and we have forgotten ourselves. Hahaha. I have no time to connect with any person, only work and my family until now. (Interviews.)

All of the BAS´s social workers in the Shatila center had begun working for the organization during the war times, feeling sense of devotion and obligation to help their own Palestinian community. After decades of work, the same motivation still gave strength for the social workers to continue. Their sort of legacy was well known in the camp and most of the families were familiar with the long history of the organization and its workers. Thus, besides ethical service delivery and service user relationships, the social workers were respected and trusted also because of their long work and devotion for the sake of community and the Palestinian cause. All of the social workers had university education in different fields outside social work official degree, yet, according to themselves, the knowledge and expertise in working with families, especially, with the Palestinian hardship cases was based on the long experience in the field rather than official trainings by BAS or university degrees. Clearly, the social workers had knowledge and understanding about the community and family life as well as the concerns touching people´s everyday lives that could not been understood or handled by the outsiders as the particular knowledge was based on shared experiences. Consequently, the individual care towards the families and the children of Shatila was driven by moral attitude that included commitment, responsiveness and responsibility for the Palestinian community as well as the shared experience of "refugeeness".

5.3 Social work practice ideology

5.3.1 Social change through education

> *My role is not lesser than a fighter who is holding a weapon against Israel. Mt my role is just different. I have a social vision. I see many problems in the families. My role is not to give them the fish but to fetch the fish themselves. Some changes occur. Our work is not easy; it is very hard because the result doesn't always appear. (Social worker 1, interviews.)*

The social workers saw the current social situations in the families worse and more complex than in the beginning of their work when Shatila center had just been established and the social work practice was characterized by crises responses to war period such as food delivery, sheltering and educational services for the children and youth. The main objective back then was to ensure the continuity of education and help families with acute social and psychological effects of war. Numerous of times the social workers told me that their work is now *harder than before*, even though the actual war episode in Lebanon was over. In the early days of BAS´ social work, youth had been easier to convince to continue at school and stay motivated. The social workers also explain that before the mothers were more abled to control their children, push them to study and protect them from bad influences that were explained coming from outside the Palestinian exile community. The change in the community life and camp circumstances as well as the protracted refugee situation had impacted the social work practice too, making social workers often inept in the face of complex family situations and in the atmosphere of desperation among the youth. In other words, the immediate crises responses to war losses had transformed into responses to long term effects of exile, discrimination and conflict that, from my viewpoint, were more than anything characterized by abstract objectives and practice ideology of identity work which was, perhaps, the most effective strategy left to respond to the family distress as well as to make a long term change in the community.

Since so many Palestinian households are solely dependent on humanitarian assistance, economic independence and social change in the community through education are the first and foremost objectives in social work practice by BAS. As Sarah Graham-Brown (1991) notes education has often been a tool of repressive regimes and a vehicle for the oppressed to fight against the oppressor (ref. in Alzaroo & Hunt 2003,166). That has been the case with the Palestinians in exile too (Alzaroo & Hunt 2003). The vital importance of universalization

of education for boys and girls was realized among the Palestinian refugees if they were to return home and regain their homeland one day. Building Palestinian identity and unity, developing skills and achieving the goal of return required emphasis on education. Thus, the Palestinian ideological approach to education was on to promote social change and liberation of the land. (Ibid.2003.) It is important to bear in mind that UNRWA as the main contributor for the Palestinian educational services has gone through severe budget shortages throughout its existence and period of operation. The problem of limited resources of UNRWA has exacerbated during the times of acute crises for example during the Lebanese civil war, succeeding war of the camps and in the first years of intifada when the agency was forced to direct its resources into immediate relief rather than developing social services such as education. (Rosenfeld 2002, 529.) The agency is currently facing a crises period because of the Syrian war and the massive refugee influx. As a consequence, NGOs such as BAS are in an important role in offering social services; furthermore, the social workers role as educators is more significant than ever.

The director of BAS told me during our conversation about Palestinian question in Lebanon that their organization is committed to building the Palestinian community and enhancing education, especially women´s education as they are responsible for socialization and education in the families. Similarly, the narratives of successful family cases by the social workers followed all the same storyline; the child had succeeded at school, perhaps gained sponsorship for higher education, had found a decent job at home or abroad and could provide and protect for his/hers family. Even though ideologically women´s education was valued, often these stories were about men rather than women as in reality, women´s success stories most often referred to successful and happy marriage and family life. Social workers by BAS felt that these cases gave them strength and motivation to continue with children's and youths educational struggles. Their mission was to seed the sense of hope and motivation into youth and try to facilitate educational opportunities.

Laura: do you talk about Palestine in your family?

Social worker 2: Yes of course, also when I was young my father and grandfather always told me about Palestine and how they lived there. I remember my father died but he always had a hope to return back to Palestine.....also we still have this hope. I talk to my children and our village and how Israelis force us to go outside. We must always to speak about this because we have a right for Palestine. Now we don't have anything to do but let our children to continue, what else we can do. We try with our activities to speak about all of our Palestinian occasions in order to let the children know about Palestine. Villages, cities, what happened. Because in UNRWA schools they don't before

they did when I was at school they spoke history and geography but not anymore.

Laura: why?

Social worker 2: it's their politics.(Interviews.)

Palestinian educational curricula are known to be inequitable, irrelevant and inaccurate in a relation to Palestinian national identity, history and politics (Rosenfeld 2002). Therefore, families, institution and NGOs are in a vital role in educating children and youth about their own history and culture. The UNRWA educational curriculum is not the focus of this thesis, yet, the political and ideological questions relating to Palestinian education is shaping the social work practice ideology as one of the main objectives of the practice is to facilitate children´s education in order to achieve social change in the Palestinian community. Nell Gabiam (2012) suggests that Palestinian refugees have inserted their political claims within the dehistorizing and depolitizing discourse of international aid attempting to reconcile development in the camps with Palestinian advocacy for the right of return:

> *"Palestinian refugees have been able to reinsert the depoliticized humanitarian relief provided by UNRWA over the years into a political narrative that views this aid as the symbol of continued international responsibility for finding a satisfactory political solution to their predicament. UNRWA's growing emphasis on development articulated around notions such as "self-reliance" and ending refugees' "dependence" on assistance contradicts this narrative. Furthermore, the return claims of Palestinian refugees have paradoxically become embedded in the material suffering that UNRWA sponsored development seeks to eradicate." (Gabiam 2012, 104.)*

The depoliticization and dehistorization in social services and humanitarian aid for Palestinian refugees, especially in education as well as their development discourses, stand for an attitude of neutralization and resettlement rather than commitment for political solutions and social change. For the Palestinian refugees, material suffering and the lack of skills and human resources are, moreover, seen as an obstacle for the political claims. Based on this view, BAS´s approach to education is critical and political -- only educated Palestinians could liberate Palestinian population. Non-formal education has come in to fill in the shortages of formal education, to redirect focus on national identity, geography and history of the homeland as well as on specific socioeconomic needs of the Palestinian refugees. Education can be seen as a remedy for the Palestinian refugees to understand their past losses and experiences in exile and to rebuild themselves and their identity. In addition it may be a mechanism for social, political and economic mobilization. (Alzaroo & Hunt 2003.) Therefore, organization like BAS and its social workers are important agents in

developing its service users´ human resources through education in order for the Palestinians to fulfill their political, social and economic aspirations. By this argument, I mean especially cultural and historical education at the centers and in homes as well as the motivational work among the youth and children.

The organizational message by BAS is evident: the change in the community is only to be achieved by education which referred to formal schooling but also cultural education in the families that was mainly mothers responsibility. Ideally speaking, mothers could raise Palestinian professionals, experts and intellectuals fighting with a social vision for the Palestinian cause, hence, not only economically independent individuals but also socially and politically conscious Palestinians advocating for resistance against Israelis´ colonialism and its impacts.

All in all, education is seen as the only chance to make a change, enhance lives, build future and escape dependency and to finally liberate Palestine. For the Palestinian refugees who do not hold economic or material resources, education is the only tool for development and social change. Furthermore, its a vehicle for knowledge, understanding, identity building and self-confidence especially for the Palestinians whose identity has been under a threat and an object of oppression. (Alzaroo & Hunt 2003.) The following interview extract with a 15 year old teenage girl highlights the importance of education in developing creative, confident and hopeful young minds.

Social worker 1: She wants to tell you a story about what she does with the computer.

Laura: yeah sure, tell me.

Hanine: I search for English stories. If I read a story and if there are big words I don't understand I go to the google translator.

Laura: What kind of stories you read?

Hanine: Unreal stories, fantasies, about dragons. I use my imagination to write it, like I would write essays. If I want to write an essay about self-confidence, I imagine it and then write. For example, if I was a new kid at school and I didn´t have any self-confidence. I wrote this in the essay to my English teacher. I wrote that nobody approaches me, I don't participate my ideas with my classmates because I am new and I´m sitting alone, maybe studying or reading, but then I decide to work on my self-confidence to make new friends. Then I wrote in the essay that one of my cousins helped to raise my self-confidence and then I had many new friends, I shared my ideas with them, my teachers all love me and they were very proud of me that I shared lot of ideas that I don't share with anyone else. I got an excellent mark. One of my friends at school tells me that I'm the father of chemistry, because I have such good marks! …

Hanine: I want everyone to hope in their life and self-confidence because self-confidence always leads to success and success lead to more success in your life. Also because we can gain respect from others if we have it: to not lose hope to return Palestine. Now I would like to know about you too.(Interviews.)

This Palestinian teenager was a confident, curious and successful girl at school. Moreover, she had internalized a mental attitude of hopefulness and determination through her educational efforts. The important point to make here is that it was not a matter of coincidence that her, specifically, was chosen by the social worker to have an interview with me. She was chosen because of her excellence in English, skills in presenting herself and her cause as well as her successful school performance. I could see that she made her parents and the social worker proud: She represented nationally conscious and skillful Palestinian young generation.

5.3.2 Family, community and nation

As examined above, social work practice by BAS seems to be characterized by family and women centered work and the analysis of this thesis has so far concentrated on social work practice dealing with women´s gender specific social reproductive roles within families. Even though, BAS is politically independent institution, meaning that it does not hold connections to any political factions or secretarian groups in Lebanon, it is a national institution with a national cause, framing the ideological basis of the practice. The family work in the field with mothers and children, hence, appeared to me above social; it was also political because of the mothers´ roles in cultural reproduction, socialization and education. Going deeper into the practice ideology of BAS´s social work, I suggest that social workers were practicing on the grounds of three ideological and institutional levels: family, community and nation, all in which emphasize mothers´ cultural roles in reproducing the next generation of Palestinians.

BAS´s social work with families operates in a certain political and ideological arena that sets specific cultural parameters for child well-being, parenting and motherhood. Women, at the heart of family life and what is means to be a Palestinian, have a central role in maintaining traditional values, honor, authenticity and cultural continuity that are closely entwined with the Palestinian national identity (Holt 2003). According to Julie Peteet (1991, 35 ref. in Holt 2007, 255) in the exile community, women´s traditional roles as socializers of children was

infused with new significance where a Palestinian identity was emerged and the memories of past were highly valued. The struggles to respond hardships of everyday life and keeping families united are, primarily, my informant mothers´ responsibilities. In addition, they account to maintaining traditional values and customs, and further pass them to the future generation, therefore, building the national identity in the community. However, the cultural values are embedded to change easily in the Palestinian exile communities, raising the significance of women´s role in reproducing the traditional values as they are an essential component of the attachment to Palestine and refugees´ national identity. (Holt 2003, 228.) The Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon are sites of distinctive difference from the Lebanese society, so called moral communities where ideals of womanhood are integrated to the realization of an ideal society. In Maria Holts words, "the sense of remaining apart from the Lebanese host population is a central aspect of Palestinian identity`" and the women have an important role in representing of what is understood the symbol of Palestine. (Holt 2007, 250.)

Now, the mothers in Shatila were fronting a difficult mission to prevail the Palestinian cultural values and morality in the community while the camp population was increasing and diversifying as well as tying to motivate and give hope for the youth when the social and economic realities were harder than ever. According to Hanna Papanek´s (1994) account, when the processes of change are perceived as coming from outside the group, further threatening the existing life patterns, the demands for family stability, women´s control and their unchanging role in the community may be emphasized (Papanek 1994, ref. in Holt 2007, 250).

> *Now the demands of the students, the youth and children have changed. Only the mother and her family were taking care of the kids before. Now there are many things internet, children community, other communications. They need to secure the needs of their children and not to let them go out of their hands. Now internet, other people influence. It is difficult. The mothers want to protect as they can and not to go out with other groups. (Social worker 3, interviews.)*

I came to realize, like the quotation above and the previous examinations in this theses show that reminiscences of the past as something better than the current life referred directly to the change in the community that was not only economic and social but also cultural in nature. It made wonder that this was an essential explanatory factor why social work practice was now understood harder than before. The community was not cohesive and united as in the past during the early decades of the camp which reflected to the sense of security as well as to the

views, values and demands of its population, simultaneously, threatening the national identity. The social work practice with the families was aiming at strengthening culture specific motherhood, from the very basic duty of child rearing and home keeping to the cultural reproduction through the women centered programs as well as culture specific activities at the Shatila center, perhaps in order to maintain the "remains" of the dignity, unity, authenticity and the cultural attachment to the homeland that was seen as the only way to achieve Palestinian political objectives.

In my view, the ideological, symbolic value of mothers in the community transcended to the social work practice with families, in addition to the cultural activities by the organization. It illustrates that social work by BAS with women is not just practical responses to family emergencies and problems but it contains more far end aspirations that are political, national and cultural in nature, further shaped by gendered discourses.

5.3.3 Human rights, justice and social work

One afternoon in December I was sitting in the Shatila center´s class room and attending a reproductive health project´s youth lesson about sexual violence. The lecture was held in Arabic so I could not really understand the content apart from the topic of discussion. However, I was intrigued by the subject and wanted to ask few questions from the lecturer at the end of the session. I went over and asked if sexual violence or physical violence in general was common among the youth in the Shatila camp. To my surprise, I received quite a blunt answer from the lecturer: don't you think that we should discuss justice before we can discuss peace. The answer caught me off guard and I was unable to continue the conversation and soon enough I was playing a ring game with the youth. Nevertheless, I could not forget the moment and from that point onward I understood that the aspiration for justice and the experience of injustice were particularly meaningful concepts to explain the cultural, social and political space ─ the abstract and ideological world of BAS´ social work.

> *I am proud to be a Palestinian but I have a problem and the Palestinian national problem hasn't been resolved yet. For other nationalities the problem has resolved. Still now we have a problem to defend about. I am a Palestinian because Palestinians despite. There is no other like Palestinians in Lebanon I cannot say that we return home tomorrow, but I hope to return. But now I want our human rights not forever, only temporarily, only to live in dignity until we return back. (Social worker 1, interviews.)*

Laura: Sounds like your mother is very kind, sympathetic and giving.

Hanine: We love our mother because if we need something she helps, helps with if we have a problem or we are sad or disappointed, She makes us very happy. She support us and encourage us to do the thing we want to do. Also if we need to go outside she makes us to go BAS not to anywhere else. Because she knows that BAS is the only safe place for us. Coz they teach us about Palestine and about traditional food, the history about Palestine. We went to the interview (with BAS) about Palestinian human rights once. I talk about human rights of return. They asked me what I want to be in the future. I told them that I want to be the president of Palestine. Hahahah. Everybody clapped.

Laura: Do you still have that dream?

Hanine: of course. She asked me why I told her because I want to make the Palestinians very happy and to support them to give them hope to return and to make their life easier because it is not like a ring that if you lose it you can buy another one but if you lose your homeland you will not buy another homeland (Interviews.)

For the Palestinian refugees, justice is directly connected to the concept of return which has not actualized yet. The main problem in the Palestinian question is captured in the negotiation of return in exile and based on the request and equality of the right to the land. However, the rights discourse among Palestinian refugees seems diverse and fragmented as not all the Palestinian refugees share the same experience of injustices, instead, the experiences are more local specific (Zreik 2004, 79). The collectively shared experiences are loss, displacement, dispossession and exile, yet Palestinian refugee in different countries enjoy different rights or lack of rights. All of my informants accounted for the grand narrative of justice and claimed for their right to return. Yet moreover, the more urgent quest was the basic human rights, in the local Lebanese context until the return is possible.

Like many other oppressed groups, The Palestinians have turned their experience of injustice into a request for sympathy and solidarity globally. The Palestinian worldwide solidarity movement is understood significant in making the change and defeating the oppressive regimes, (Zreik 2004, 79), especially, in the circumstance where an united political entity is missing to protect the rights of the refugees. Having argued this, it appeared to me that one of BAS´s most evident anti-oppression strategies was promoting solidarity for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon by hosting visitors and sponsors as well as participating in wider solidarity movement for the Palestinians. Social workers regularly participated and represented the organization in different national events and public occasions and demonstrations locally, especially in those where the Palestinian case was on the agenda, but

also had traveled to some of the donor countries such as Finland through the partnership organizations. Above all, global awareness about Palestinians' discrimination and deprivation was increased by all the foreign contacts with the NGOs and private sponsors, journalists or researchers as already mentioned previously in this study. It was evident that one of the social workers most important missions was to promote human rights for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Human rights and social work are inseparably connected. Jim Ife (2001, 1-3) recommends that human rights can provide social workers a moral basis for their everyday practice as well as to guide in the areas of community work, policy advocacy or activism. Human rights approach to social work can link many different social work roles into a unified and holistic view of practice that concerns all the social workers in the world: the basic values and principles of all social work are constant with human rights. The right to respect, equality and self-determination, protection from discrimination and exploitation, right to livelihood, education, work, and access to health care and social services are all fundamental basic human rights that most of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon do not enjoy. Thus, the quest for the basic human rights was inevitably the basis of the social work practice morality or ideology. Social workers and teachers were educating children and youth at the Shatila center on the most important human rights law provisions that stated justice for the Palestinian refugees. Only presented as an example, it nonetheless remarks for the rights and justice discourse prevailed in the social work practice by BAS. Like in all social work, human rights are at the heart of the practice.

It seemed to me that ´injustice´ was like a dark cloud over so many experiences that my informants had gone through. It was an individual and collective feeling, experience and reality of unfair and unequal occurrences throughout the history and people´s life spans. On the January 11th 2014, the streets of Shatila and Sabra were fully crowded and people were celebrating the death of Ariel Sharon, previous Israeli defense minister during the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Fireworks and gun shots were fired in the air and Arab delights were offered to by passers on the streets. On the following day, I asked one of the social workers at the Shatila center about people´s feelings relating to the death of probably the most hated man in the camp refugees´ history. She replied calmly that maybe they feel happy but the death of Ariel Sharon does not bring justice to the people. It was obvious that only recognition and condemnation for his crimes would have brought justice. I assume only self-determination and return as well as realization of human rights and social justice would bring

sense of righteousness to people.

As unity, communality and sense of Palestinian identity have been essential elements for the camp refugees to fight for their human rights in the short run and justice for the long run, I perceived BAS´s social work in a major role in tackling the disappearing and fragmenting support mechanism and social networks as well as enforcing the sense of national identity, especially now in the period of extreme vulnerability and poverty. The social justice agenda in social work draws attention to grassroot level action and community empowerment, respect for human dignity, locality and cultures, equality in opportunities and human development as well as to the injustices that create exclusion and sense of "Otherness"(Dominelli 2010). The recreational and educational activities by BAS, the advocacy work as well as the interpersonal family work and social networks with the community members increased community participation, sense of togetherness and cultural identity. In addition, it contributed to human development, not only to economics or standards of living but also to the psychological well-being and development. Consequently, social work by BAS could be perceived as an anti-oppression strategy for justice where the grassroot level actions, global connectedness and solidarity, responses to family emergencies, cultural unity and communality, as well as, development of minds and skills could bring about justice to the Palestinian refugees in the long term.

5.4 The Role of diasporic consciousness in social work

5.4.1 Palestinian victimhood, memory and agency

I am sitting in the living room of a survivor of the Sabra and Shatila massacre with Social worker 1, translator, a Norwegian researcher and his camera man who is interviewing the lady for his research. We are all sitting around the Palestinian woman and a young girl offers us all Arabic coffee. There are children in the house in the other room but I´m not sure who they are. Maybe they are her grandchildren. Perhaps Social worker 1 already introduced the children but I was not paying attention. I don´t ask. I just follow quietly because I don't want to interrupt. The researcher had given me a permission to follow his visits and interviews with families as my job was to follow social workers` job and social worker 1 was facilitating all the interviews. First, we all are sitting quietly and I feel uncomfortable with the silence. Then Social worker 1 asks the Norwegian shall the lady start telling her story and he encourages her to begin. The lady starts

telling her personal story which is a detailed description of the events during the massacre and how her family members were murdered. I notice that the researcher is touched and feeling emotional. He seems overwhelmed and lack of words. It looks like he is a little teary. Social worker 1 on the other hand is asking questions and telling that she knows her story by heart. I feel she is trying to help the researcher to get all the information and the whole story. I don´t feel focused on what she is telling. My thoughts are flying around and I'm not present. There are so many people in the room and the filming is disturbing me. Why aren't I feeling as emotional and overwhelmed like the Norwegian is? What I´m hearing is cruel and brutal? I have heard stories like this before though. I little girl enters the room and sits next to the lady. I´m thinking she shouldn't be in the room and listening the story. I think its too much for her age. The lady finishes her story and everybody is thanking her and getting ready to leave. However, I want to ask question." How did you cope? How did the life continued after the trauma and when everything here in the camp was destroyed?" "What else can I do but to continue", she replies with one sentence. I feel stupid and a little embarrassed by my question as if I had just implied that continuing was impossible or not understandable. The translator, who is a lady from another NGO, begins telling me, as we are leaving the house, how many, like herself, wanted to help rebuilt their community after the massacre. Everything was destroyed and so many had died or injured but there is no other option but to continue life. I try to understand but I´m not sure if i really do. We leave the house and move to the next family. (Fieldnotes.)

From my viewpoint, the field note extract above is relevant for three particular reasons. Firstly, it points out one of the most prevailing practice tasks of social work by BAS, which is to facilitate and organize family visits, show around the camp and introduce the Shatila center and its operation to the visitors. Secondly, it reflects my own personal feelings about hearing experiences of injustices and violence continuously. After all the acquaintances and conversations with the Palestinian refugees in Shatila, I realized that so many have had tragedy and loss in their lives. Yet, people seemed surprisingly open and willing to tell their personal experiences to outsiders. Social workers explained to me that people in fact feel relaxed to have somebody interested in hearing their experiences and, naturally, the objective of sharing personal struggles was related to raising awareness about their situation and suffrage in the camp.

After some time, I began to perceive the so called victim stories sort of impersonal, perhaps as a psychological defense mechanism but also because the narratives of victimhood told were repeatedly relatively similar, about poor housing, health, education as well as experiences of loss, massacre and violence, or perhaps I was gradually learning to detach myself in order to see more objectively what was happening around me. In any case,

Moreover, I often felt that the stories and experiences were told in an informative and goal-directed way because the interview settings to satisfy my or somebody else´s objectives of visit in the camp rather than in an interpersonal, individual and emotional way, all facilitated through social work. In addition, it was obvious that I was not the first outsider to be shared the stories with; so accustomed or conditioned most of my informants appeared hosting, receiving and discussing with an outsider. At times, I could sense that the social workers were also steering particular conversation topics or filling in the stories while visiting the families. As a result, I began wondering whether the social work practice itself was concealing politics of victimization and, furthermore, if I was myself neglecting the diversity of human experience as well as my informants own agency and whether this was transcending to my study. In other words, if I was generalizing women´s experiences and constructing my informants into homogenous categories, into victims. This thought leads to my third puzzle and the topic of this chapter enclosed within the extract: what is the connection between social work, victimhood and agency in the Palestinian refugee context?

In the study of victimhood, two contrasting views can be detected. On the one hand, victimhood can imply to passivity, meaning that "the victim" is the diminishing agent who has been subjected to other, often oppressive forces, thus, not an active agent itself. Accordingly, victimhood narratives seem to be often reproduced as a result of communities 'experiences of historical and structural inequalities and injustice. The passive victim perspective, however, neglects the social and historical dimensions of victimhood and agency. Above individual pain, suffering becomes something social, communally shared, with political and moral implications. (Rosland 2009.) It is also important to note that "*discourses of victimhood simultaneously exclude and conceal as they exclude the recognition of other victims and they conceal the agency of victims in their victimhood*" (Ochs 2006, 357). Perhaps needless to say, the tragedies of massacres and conflicts, as well as the everyday violence of discrimination and poverty are felt and experienced at an individual level in people´s everyday lives causing psychological effects and feelings of victimhood, yet, I believe concurrently also shaping the communal, Palestinian experience of exile in Lebanon. The common victimhood can, however, in Juliana Ochs´(2006, 357) words be "*allusive*", neglecting the diversity, culpability and contextuality of experiences. Thus, perhaps the individual resistance, renewal and survival stories can be concealed behind the grand narratives of victimhood that are commonly shared. Regardless, I recommend that the victim stories contribute to survival and are a way to continue after tragedy ─ a central part

of Palestinian refugees ´collective subjectivity and consciousness of themselves.

As Laleh Khalili (2008) writes on Palestinian camp refugees in Lebanon, tragedy has taken over in understanding the presence and constructing the past. Throughout the years of Palestinian national uprising, official memorials had commemorated sacrifice and heroism in the cause of the nation. However, the withdrawal of nationalist factions from the camps has resulted in exclusion of the Palestinian refugees from the political processes that affect their lives. Simultaneously, the narratives of heroism derived from battle experiences have shifted to the narratives of suffrage derived from the experiences of tragedy and massacre in order to race awareness and sympathy of their fate in the global arena. (Khalili 2007; 2008.) Due to the experience of colonization, forcible exile, discriminatory Lebanese policies, failed revolutionary ferment, as well as, the ongoing refugee situation and negligence by the Palestinian authority and the international community, Palestinian refugees are depoliticized by diminished decision making power and freedom of choice. However, as Laura Jeffery (2006, 309) argues in her study about displaced Chagossians, depoliticized victims might enable organizations to attract sympathy, development projects and financial assistance from various of patron groups and external supporters, hence, making depoliticization a political act itself. Drawing upon Jeffreys (2006) account, BAS´s anti-oppression strategies for justice are driven by Palestinian victimhood discourse, therefore, making this non-political organization and de-politicized social work, in deed, a political action itself. In Shatila camp individual victim narratives are shared in a public space, to touch and reach global awareness. Yet, the stories are not only reflection of individual pain and suffrage but can be also described a representation of communal memory of victimhood in order to receive justice. Thus, the victimhood becomes political, a claim for recognition and a central part of agency.

Victimhood often implies femininity that women are rather acted upon than actors themselves. From the feminist point of view, women are victims of patriarchal subordination and diminished political power; yet, this categorization may fail to see women´s agency, diversity and difference within victimhood. (Heru 2001, 14.) Even though victimhood and the collective memory suffrage appear to be an inherent component in the Palestinian refugees´ identity construction and their political claim, my informants did not only construct themselves as passive victims, in fact, my contention is, without disregarding families' deprivation and the experiences of tragedy, that, simultaneously, victimhood narratives were meant to invoke sympathy and solidarity as a kind of political action, as a

step towards social chance. Instead, many of my informants were resourceful mothers controlling many aspects in their everyday lives, women who had found ways to continue, rebuilt and renew after tragedy and loss. The head of the Shatila center explained to me once that women had taken control and found power in them in the face of a crisis during the Israeli invasion and war of the camps. When most of the men were either injured, killed or disappeared, women were the once wading through war-torn ruins, lifting heavy rocks, going out from the shelters, picking up food and threatening themselves to bombs and snipers. The social workers were examples of their selves of resilience and survival through their social action as well as commitment and strength to help the community members in need. (Resilience discussed in further detail in the next analysis chapter.) I believe the significance here is to look beyond women solely as passive victims while at the same time recognizing their suffering of war times, insecurity, gender oppression as well as the everyday violence of poverty and discrimination.

On the January 7th 2014, I observed Palestinian martyrs day celebration at the Shatila center during which mothers of deceased sons and daughters were invited over for the commemoration march in the camp. First and foremost, women were honored in their roles as mothers and wives of heroes and martyrs as well as because their experience of loss and continues violence. The day was only one of the annual national commemorations to celebrate mothers that were organized at the center. Other important occasions were the mothers day as well as the commemoration day of Sabra and Shatila massacre. The purpose of the celebrations was of course the commemoration practice itself that was experienced important by many to deal with pain of loss, but also as a communal event and celebration that brought sense of relaxation. Maria Holt (2007) argues for more nuanced understanding of Palestinian camp refugee women´s roles and identities than simply constructing them as victims or wives and mothers of heroes without active participation in resistance in their own right, referring to actual social and political activity as well as cultural resistance by reproducing collective diasporic memory and retaining a strong national identity. I found that the service user mothers and the other female friends of the center were celebrated and honored as heroic but not only because of their past struggles and losses as victims and grievers but also because of their current struggles racing their children and meeting the needs of everyday life as well as their roles as socializers and reproducers of diasporic memory.

Family memory and oral history play a fundamental role in Palestinian identity construction.

Through narrations of the past, children are taught how to be a Palestinian. Oral history of the exodus, experience of Nakba and massacres are told from one generation to the other. The images of the past are described repeatedly in the families and idealized in the light of hardship that many of the people are currently facing. (Dorai 2002; Knudsen 2005; Mayroudi 2007.)

Laura: What do you like to do on your free time, when you´re not at school?

Farah (10 years old): I like to draw. I like to draw al-Quds, Jerusalem. Our mother told us stories about Jaffa.

Does your mother tell you often stories about Palestine?

Aminah (9 years old : yes, we watch Palestinian channel sometimes at home and we also made a play about Palestine in the BAS center during the summer activities. (Interviews.)

BAS´s activities at the Shatila center were shaped by the tradition of common memory of oral history. While following some of the children´s activities, teachings and commemorations of the national suffer dates (Balfour declaration, Nakba, Israeli invasion and the massacre, war of the camps etc.) I was often puzzled how children are, in fact, taught to be victims and how would this impact on the mindset of the children and their ways of knowing themselves and their worth, their sense of identity. On the one hand, I also felt amazed how all of the children knew their home villages in Palestine and when I saw them drawing identical pictures of their imaginative houses in Palestine with olive trees, gardens, lambs in the yard and, naturally, the key ─ a Palestinian symbol for right to return. On day on my free time I was watching a movie about a relationship between a Palestinian refugee boy in Lebanon and an Israeli fighter. One scene of the movie took a place in PLO´s militia training camp in Shatila where the young men were yelling revolutionary slogans. While watching the scene I recognized the slogan because I had heard children yelling the same slogan during their activities at the BAS center. Undoubtedly the Palestinian collective memory was shaping BAS´s activities for the children and youth and the tradition of oral history and common memory was played out in forms of games, songs, dance, and teachings with a purpose of strengthening the Palestinian national identity.

5.4.2 Resilience and hope

Everything else can be rebuilt except for human life (Social worker 1, fieldnotes.)

In the morning I am having a conversation with social worker 2 at the office in the BAS center. We are discussing about the families that she is taking care of. I am explaining her something when I notice that her concentration interrupts and she starts looking around in the room. She cuts me short and says: "Sorry Laura, but there was a bomb, a big bomb somewhere close!" I did not hear the bomb and I am shocked. She is surprised I did not feel it or hear the sounds of it. The dentist enters the room and apparently he felt his work desk shaking. More people come into the room and everybody is speaking loudly in Arabic, walking around and making phone calls. I don't understand what is happening. How come everybody else heard the bomb but me? Is it OK to go outside? There was a car bomb by the Iranian embassy which is close to the camp. Social worker 2 nervously laughs a little and says her heart is still beating fast. She tells that her child goes to the UNRWA school next to the embassy. After some phone calls, we are sure that no school children were injured. A kindergarten teacher comes downstairs and asks if I'm OK and if I'm scared. I tell her I'm OK but a little shocked. She laughs a little and wishes me:" Welcome to Lebanon!" She continues: "Today you come to the camp, maybe tomorrow you don't." Social worker 1 joins in and says that it could be you or me next, we don't know. This is how bad the situation is in Lebanon. That's life. For a while, everybody is talking about the bomb and giving me details about the number of causalities and injuries. Then the social workers take their reports and files out and continue working. Some mothers come to the center to pick up their children from the kindergarten before the closing time but the head of the center does not give permission. She says the day will continue normally for the children. (Fieldnotes.)

By observing the aftermath of the Beirut explosives and people´s reactions in times of insecurity and danger, I found that after the initial shock, everything turned quickly back into normal daily routines. Perhaps few days after the explosives streets were little less crowed, everybody was speaking about the news and the atmosphere seemed careful. Coming from a country where political violence and conflict is not a current reality, It was difficult for me to comprehend how violence and insecurity in the field seemed something inherent in human experience that people had to cope with.

People feel no other solution for them but to continue in life. Maybe many are accustomed because of the many wars before. They felt that many were missed, died or killed. Maybe you have noticed that during the explosives, explosion happens and the next day life continues. Like this. They are accustomed. (Social worker 1, interviews.)

The notions of ´continuing´ and ´being accustomed´ reflected people´s need to seek normalcy in adversity and how people coped with and made sense of the surrounding insecurity. Even though I was repeatedly told by my informants how hopeless the situation for them was and how they were suffering, simultaneously, women were performing daily routines relating to home and childcare and making choices that would positively impact their and their children´s lives such as searched for connections, networks and opportunities to meet the material needs or to find ease of mind under the stress. Women´s role in the private sphere as homemakers may have had led into positive accounts and concentration on children and their well-being above the stressors of everyday life and even the political conflict and physical insecurity. I found that continuing was synonymous to adaption to hardship.

Human coping, adaption and survival in conflict affected areas or in situations of adversity are often approached through the concept of resilience. It can explain how families and individuals achieve emotional adjustment and social functioning in a context where conflicts and violence have resulted in disruption of livelihoods, education and networks of social support. (Walsh 2007; Eggerman & Panter Brick 2010.) Mark Eggerman and Cathrine Panter-Brick (2010, 71-72) have found that, especially, hope and faith, based on cultural and religious values, constitute resilience among children and adults in Afghanistan. According to Arshi Shaikh and Carol Kauppi (2010, 166), the sociological perspective on resilience emphasizes active decision making, resistance to structural conditions and survival as major forms of resilience. Therefore, human agency; the autonomy, resourcefulness, active choices of individuals as well as the resistance against dominate culture and oppressive forces are intuitively useful concepts in describing resilience. (Shaikh & Kauppi 2010, 166-168).

The social suffering and hopelessness among the Palestinian refugees in the field related to hopeless situations or circumstances and was collectively constructed, in addition to individual pain, in order to achieve solidarity and sympathy as a kind of political action. The social workers often requested the families not to lose hope or confidence. The social workers reminded the mothers to stay strong and that they were not alone with the problems they were facing in life, they were Palestinian problems. This was meant to bring about comfort and relief. Similarly, the head of the center explained to me on one occasion that because of the Palestinian history and experience, Palestinian refugees were special kind and strong to have survived and continued hoping after all the suffrage in the course of history. It sounded as if from the experience of collective suffering was found the collective strength to

face future adversity that was channeled through the sense of hope.

> *I remember my father died but he always had a hope to return back to Palestine.....also we still have this hope. I talk to my children and our village and how Israelis force us to go outside. We must always to speak about this because we have a right for Palestine. Now we don't have anything to do but let our children continue, what else we can do. We try with our activities to speak about all of our Palestinian occasions in order to let the children know about Palestine. Villages, cities, what happened. (Social worker 2, interviews.)*

Hope was constructed around the political claim of return to Palestine and to the human rights discourse as well as to the spiritual world of faith, that of life events being in the hands of destiny or God´s will. Hope was, thus, a mechanism for resilience to cope, adjust and continue in life. Above all, hope was linked to the shared memory of injustices on the grounds of strong ideological commitment for the Palestinian cause. The victimhood discourses contributed to the right claiming that, further constituted to sense of hope. The Palestinian camp refugees in Shatila share the traumatic the experience of forced exile, displacement, loss of lives, homes and property and discrimination, however, as diaspora scholars such as James Clifford (1994, 311) argues, the suffrage coexist with the sense of hope, adaptation and survival. "*Coming to terms with traumatic loss involves making meaning of trauma experience, putting in perspective and weaving the experience of loss and recovery into the fabric of individual and collective identity and life passage"* that is facilitated through spiritual connections, stories and memories as well as memorial rituals and celebrations (Walsh 2007 210-213). Following this point, I found that the recreational and commemoration activities by BAS were significant in facilitating resilience.

It is worth wise to mention too that the social workers themselves have gone through the same experiences, begun their work after the trauma of Sabra and Shatila massacre and felt obligated and devoted to help their Palestinian community in the face of emergency. They have found meaning and purpose through community activism and advocacy in order to help others and achieve social change, which are activities considered as mechanisms for resilience, to honor the losses and prevent future harm (Walsh 2007, 213). The family work by the social workers as well as the gender specific activities at the BAS center are responses to family cohesion, social networks and community connection as well as cultural authenticity and honor in the community. Through the gendered expectations, connections to mothers and family interventions, children´s wellbeing and continuity of daily routines as

well as education is addressed. It is crucial to restore order, safety and stability as well as to recognize family and social systems when communities are facing emergencies and disruption (Walsh 2007, 213).

I suggest that, the social work practice methodologies of hope and confidence building through face to face interaction as well as cultural activities can be understood as political and cultural resistance against the oppressive stereotypes and culture of "otherness". Children were thought to be proud of who they were and where they came from. They´re sense of self-worth and national identity was reinforced by encouragements and cultural identity building. It was evident that the physical surrounding of the operation as well as the practice itself was constructing difference against oppressors: the Lebanese society, Israel and the world that had turned its back on Palestinians. As a grass root level social action, the social workers were resisting discrimination and exclusion by facilitating material relief as well as social, educational and health services for the refugee families most in need and contributed to resilience by organizing relaxation, taking part on political advocacy and strengthening cultural affiliation in the community. Above passive victims, the mothers of the families, often with the help of social work, had found ways to deal with dual pressure of home and work or managed to find alternative community, family or/and organizational connection to secure everyday routine and normalcy for their families and perhaps found gratification from their roles at the heart of family and community life. Thus, showing signs of resilience, even at times of acute insecurity.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Social work as identity politics: In between ´universalism´ and `difference`

Social work, practiced everywhere in the world, is constructed around cultural, social and political ideas and ideals about change in individual´s lives as well as broadly in the society (See Payne 1997; Payne 2008). Also, we social work students, practitioners or scholars seem to have certain ideas what social work is or should be. My initial assumptions, before entering the field was that social work in Shatila had to be something `different` or exclusive, more political and emancipatory, apart from the Finnish social work context with refugees because of the local specific cultural, political, social and historical circumstances that the social work practice with Palestinian refugees was relating to. Along with Ranta-Tyrkkö in her ethnography about social work and theater in India (2010, 303), I came to notice too that, as much as being culturally specific, the practice seems effortlessly link to some universalists notions and perspectives about the nature of social work. In Shatila, social work is aiming at social change, family well-being, independence and fulfillment of basic human rights, which are all concerns directly connected to the structural and political imbalances in the Lebanese society resulting in discrimination, poverty and lack of human choice in social work service users´ lives. Reaching beyond of its particular context though, human rights and social change discourses are prevalent in all social work as ethical and theoretical grounding and, moreover, founded in global processes of inequality that shape social work as an action and a moral position. Social work practice tasks by BAS such as financial aid distribution, responses to family issues, relationships and networks, as well as, service delivery and guidance, programming and management tasks are principally very familiar and applicable to everyday social work practice in Finland too. In addition, I was surprised to realize that some of the dominant scholarly discussions of my home university, about the inherent so called rivalry between support, care and control elements in social work (e.g. Juhila 2006; Jokinen 2008), were observable in such a culturally different social work context. The family-centered social work by BAS included cultural bound demands and conditions for "motherhood", expecting mothers to not only perform respectfully the daily household duties and child care but also to show signs of resilience, adjustability and strength in the face of insecurity and daily hardships. Moreover, the emphasis was put on

mothers roles as educators and socializers of the next generations of Palestinians to gain long term change in the community. Conditionality, concerning especially the household, child care and, who received financial assistance and how it was utilized, firstly, aimed at achieving the best possible conditions for child growth and development but also, secondly, to show progress and effectiveness of the sponsorship program to the donors and partners of the organization in order for it to sustain its operation. The point here to bring forth is that social work, even with its most noble and devoted interests, involve power relations within that are not perhaps detectable at first, yet, continuously present by constructing hierarchies, categories and differences (compare e.g. Gambrill 2001).

The most challenging and intriguing part of the whole research process has been "undressing" and "revealing" these boundaries, categories and notions of `difference´ as my theoretical and methodological orientations of postmodernism, constructivism and critical social theory have guided me towards that direction. As my primary focus has been on postcolonial and diasporic identities, I have approached social work by BAS in the light of agency and identity politics in a way that depicts the cultural locations, relationships and positions of "Other" within the social work practice. The humanitarian emergency context, from which social work by BAS derives its main perspectives and principles, is a direct impact of colonialism and its continuous policies and practices. The political and economic subordination and exclusion of the Palestinian refugees is embedded in systems and beliefs of colonial other. Also, the role of colonialism in the humanitarian relief among Palestinian refugees is apparent as it establishes subjects of helpers and victims and creates hierarchical relationships in order to keep status quo (See De Torrenté 2004). The main educational, health and social service field for the Palestinian refugees by UNRWA and other local or international humanitarian organizations only sustain lives; yet, fail to achieve social change without prober public local responses and international commitment to change the protracted refugee situation. The family cases that social work was responding to were the hardest of the hard among the Palestinian camp refugees, whether orphanage or social hardship cases. The mothers and the social workers were particularly worried about the learning and other cognitive difficulties of children as well as the increasing psychological problems among the camp population. In general, due to the malnutrition, poor environmental conditions as well as years of conflict, Palestinian refugees suffer from numerous of psychological and physical health problems and injuries. Secondly, the lack economic resources and limited future employment and education possibilities create motivation problems and increase problems of

school dropouts and early marriages. The over-crowdedness, migration and crumpling camp infrastructure have weakened the traditional social support mechanisms and networks creating sense of insecurity and suspicion. The social problems in the camp have only intensified as result of Syrian conflict that has also brought back the acute threat of political violence endangering physical integrity of the camp residents. The social problems cannot be changed without adequate social service resources and delivery as well as fundamental change in the Lebanese legal framework. As a consequence, NGOs such as BAS have come in to fill in the service caps, aiming for family independence through education and advocacy for human rights in orders to achieve long term social change in the community. Moreover, BAS is attempting to divert the de-politicized and de-historicized public help discourses by shifting focus on identity building and inserting their political claims within the service. I have come to conclude that the cultural distinctiveness of social work by BAS, hence, is its nature as identity politics, and in such, as a resistance and social action against the impacts of colonialism.

Critical ethnography has offered me a tool to examine the ideological and value basis of social work and detect connections between agency and structure embodied in social work service tasks and relationships. Above culture and location specific knowledge production about meanings relating to social work, I have tried to show the political implications of the practice as well as to address critically the injustices and hierarchies in the social work domain. My observations about identity politics within social work practice by BAS elevate cultural politics in the center of social work practice, theory and values. Principally, it denotes how social work is shaped by cultural, social, economic, political values and meanings, and how these are reproduced and negotiated within the practice. *Social work by BAS as identity politics* is dealing with Palestinian refugees as a specific cultural and ideological identity group that has made rights and status claims based on "victimized" identity to gain global sympathy and solidarity, to further reach their political objectives of return and self-determination as well as social change in the local context (compare e.g Escoffier 1998; Heru 2001). By organizing recreational, educational and commemorative activities as well as by focusing on psychological and personal well-being, self-esteem and confidence of the service users, social work relied on collective identity building and cultural affirmation and networks in the community. At the same time though, social workers facilitated difference on the grounds of "otherness" and "victimhood" as one of the social worker´s most important practice tasks was to perform as gate openers to the camp and to

individuals` life experiences, victim stories that were shared in the public space to race awareness of the Palestinian predicaments and, also, by building their activities around cultural traditions and collective memory of injustice, teaching children about decades of wars, losses, martyrs and massacres.

The change or, better, disintegration of the community as well as the hardened economic and social conditions in the camp have resulted in kind of "hopeless" situations, yet, sparking and sustaining hope as an integral part of resilience was one of the most important anti-oppressive strategies performed by BAS and its social workers as they constructed dreams, plans and aspirations together with the service user families. With dispersal, dislocation and disintegration of the Palestinian community, the social workers have attempted to mobilize institutional services available for Palestinian refugees as well as kin, social and community networks for emotional and practical support, also, grounding their practice on cultural, identity, family, community and spiritual connections (compare Walsh 2007, 218). The collective identity and sense of hope was based on diasporic consciousness, constituted by collective memory of exile and social suffering that simultaneously worked as a source of collective strength and unitive factor, and was reinforced during the activities as well as interpersonal communication in service relationships. By using gender analysis in my interpretation work, I found interrelated links between "motherhood", diasporic consciousness and social work as the gender specific activities and gendered expectations in family work emphasized mothers roles in cultural reproduction of diasporic memory, passing on the national story as well as trying to keep their children secured from "bad influences" outside the community, staying motivated and focused on education and hopeful for the future. The mothers had role in developing the culture and to maintain dignity and unity in the community through feminine gender attributes and characteristics of birthing, nurture and care in the levels of family, community and nation. Besides individual pain and suffrage, the personal victim stories shared by my informants expressed a claim for recognition as a central part of their agency, yet simultaneously showing resistance against victimization by presenting themselves as capable actors in their own lives and contributors to family well-being. Thus, beyond their roles in reproduction or victims under patriarchal control, heroism or clientism, I conceived my informant mothers resilient and resourceful in finding means to ensure the wellbeing of their families by maintaining organizational and/or family networks locally and transnationally, and in some cases reaching out to the paid labor market and also finding sense of comfort in being control of family life and child care.

Even though, identity politics seemingly aims for equality, justice and change in the society, it thrives from difference, separatism and collective group identity opposed to "Other", which might reject just and comprehensive solutions to social problems in the society. (See e.g. Escoffier 1998, 191; Lewis 2005, 351-352; Pappé 2010, 155-163) Lebanon is distorted by contesting narratives of identity between the sectarian communities and the tensions have only intensified between the different religious-political groups after the war broke in Syria. All of these groups are based on their own identity politics with self-centered interests and perspectives on nationhood. The collective sense of victimhood exerts its effects upon the group members' view of themselves, yet at the same time, their perceptions and feelings towards their opponents, and furthermore may hamper their willingness to move towards co-existence or reconciliation with them (Bar-Tal & Cehajic-Clancy 2014). Critically to say, the practiced identity politics by BAS and its social workers might be, thus, kind of delusive too in promoting social change with its victimhood discourses and narratives of poverty and lack of rights. Also identity politics based on the national cause might restrict gender equality as it is often founded on gendered expectations on women in their reproductive roles and as symbols of what it means to be a Palestinian. Even though BAS is ideologically committed to gender equality and most of its programs in Shatila are directed on women´s issues, it cannot be ignored how patriarchal nationhood discourses too are acted out in family work and mothers are evaluated and categorized according to culturally bound definitions of "good motherhood". Perhaps, more all-encompassing and dialogical perspectives on the national history and the present day social circumstances could be integrated in activities with youth and children as a step forward building survival identities and more comprehensive view on change in the society.

BAS and its social workers who act as gatekeepers in the camp tell their service users that their participation is research, journalism and accepting visitors is important for advocacy thereby changing their conditions, yet, positive social change in the community have yet to occurred. The problem of lack of rights is addressed through individual victimization as part of a larger political action, yet as such, social work practice constitute a bigger problem where visitors, NGOs and social workers exert their own agendas and the camp residents own agency and self-determination might be neglected (compare Sukarieh & Tannock 2012). This also raises an ethical dilemma at the core of my theses, as I believe I have been part of BAS´s organizational agenda, told what I needed to know to speak for the Palestinian refugees as well as exerted my own agenda in research. In my opinion, this consideration

however indicates one of the main conclusion of my study: Social work cannot be separated from its cultural, political, economic and social determinates that create foundations for care and commitment to impact positively on change in service users lives. Thereby social work and its organisatory context is constructed around cultural meanings and values how this change is ought to come and what kind of responses are considered appropriate, engendering demands and conditions for the service users. As such however, it shifts power and authority on the social workers´ side functioning as political actors acting often upon rather than with the service users. Identity politics in social work by BAS demonstrates how social work as a practice focuses on particular identity group, the colonial "Other", and therefore operates as a cultural resistance and critique. However, it also conceals patterns of power and oppressive practice its self, driven by organizational agenda and demands. While genuinely caring and committed to help, social worker's hold hierarchical decision making power and authority in terms of financial assistance, problem categories and advocacy, constructing so called culture specific clienthood in their everyday practice.

6.2 Discussions on professionalism: Ideology above all?

I have attempted in my study to identify the ideological forms active within social work practice by BAS and the dominant practice-based strategies and responses influenced by the culture and gender specific ideology as a contribution to critical analysis in social work research. In this sense, my dissertation takes part in critical discussions on professionalism in social work as it examines different perspectives on social work and the believe systems, values and interests shared within the practice. Thus, redefines, or more, enriches the universal social work paradigm on professionalism associated with certain methods, values, relationships and concepts. This is what professionalism scholars such as Kimmo Saaristo (2010, 148-149) call for "open" professionalism that emphasize local and context specific professionalism, negotiated in certain time and place, as a product of postmodern era.

Social workers by BAS defined their expertise in working with Palestinian social hardship cases on the basis of shared experiences, community knowledge and long working history in the field. Even though, none of the social workers had university education in social work, they had conducted several social work trainings throughout the years of practice. Regardless, the social workers emphasized the role of experience above university degrees or official trainings as working with such complex family situations required knowledge of

camp life, history, cultural traditions and social networks as well as institutional connections. Actually, the experience-based knowledge was moreover founded on equality and sharing the similar life experiences and diasporic consciousness with the service- user families. Some social workers outside the Palestinian community had come and tried to do the job but had experienced it too demanding and challenging and could not create relationships with the families. The distinctive factor between "they" and "them" was the fact that the social workers were from the same Palestinian community around the camp opposed to Lebanese or foreign workers. Social workers experienced their work hard, yet, rewarding and meaningful. Their devotion for social work and social change in the community was not based on sympathy or love toward service user families but rather on professional care on the grounds of ideological commitment for the political and social cause. The ideological commitment for the Palestinian cause was, thereby, manifested in motivation and devotion by the social workers that helped them to continue and find strength in working with the Palestinian hardship families.

The Social workers had begun working for the organization during war times and felt obligated to help the families in their own community. Although the early years of practice were characterized by acute war and disaster responses, the current family situations were experienced harder than before because the community itself and the camp circumstances had transformed more complex and challenging. Malcom Carey and Vistoria Foster (2013) claim that the reliance upon cultural hegemony, or dominant ideology, in social work increases as it becomes more uncertain and dependent upon unpredictable markets of social care. They further suggest that analysis of the relationship between ideology and social work can help to increase understanding of social work practice. Respectively, the change in social, political, economic spheres in Shatila might have led the into more ideological forms of practice than less because of the disruption of traditional support mechanism and depleting services and resources for the Palestinians in Lebanon transmitting ideology through family-centered and, educational work as well as cultural activities.

The role of culture specific ideology and shared experiences at the center of social work practice, rather than scientific knowledge, specialist trainings or exclusionary methods, reflect diversity of social work as profession, movement and discipline (compare Ranta-Tyrkkö 2010, 927). Since social workers´ one of the most evident culture-specific strategies for social change was to build hope in the community, which could have not been possible without personal sense of hope and ideological commitment, it made me wonder who would

be the next generations of social workers in Shatila, and if they would obtain the same ideological stands in their practice and ways of doings. In addition, since the social workers were trusted because of their long legacy in the camp as well as their wide web of social networks, it created a particular departure point for the relationship building and problem responses that could potentially be challenging for new social workers, especially in the atmosphere of suspicion towards the humanitarian organizations and their agendas in the camp. Thus, I cannot imagine social work by BAS in Shatila, as I observed it, to be performed by anybody else but my informant social workers. Moreover, it is hard to imagine that social work practice in Shatila would remain unchangeable as the community was so vulnerable to change and social work would have to continuing adapting to the political and social fragmentary trends. Throughout the years of practice, the management tasks too; effectiveness measures and performance surveillance had intensified by filling and report systems as well as evaluation procedures which indicate how the prevailing ideas of neoliberalism projected on social work and its practice development. Whereas the social workers themselves accounted on their experience-based expertise, their well detected strategies and ways of doings, the management level of organization was planning to develop the management procedures and the idea of professionalism among the social workers, not only in Shatila but in every camp where BAS was operating.

I kept pondering whether social work in general had room for genuine care while observing the relationships between social workers and the service users, and was there, in fact, a divisive line between professional and unprofessional practice, too close and too distant, or ethical and unethical service relationships. In Shatila, the genuine care was first and foremost grounded in mutual trust, shared commitment, responsiveness, responsibility and experiences in the community that were played out in interpersonal service relationships with the mothers, whether measured as too personal or not by the terms of professionalism in social work. Nevertheless, my insights showed how influenced I personally was by the professionalism discourses through my official university education and how the same power discourses were reaching to Shatila, across core and periphery, in order to evaluate, categorize and draw boundaries in helping processes and client relationships (see Foucault 1977 on welfare professionalism ref. in Carey & Foster 2013, 262).

The future cannot be predicted, yet, my line of thoughts suggests the significance of certain time, place, actors and discourses of social work, and furthermore the intensifying change in social, economic and political forces in the current globalizing and postmodern time that

affect social work practice. These processes, perhaps, call for extension of more ideology in social work practice, movement and research than before.

6.3 Contributions to refugee work in Finland?

Lately, refugee issues in Finnish news have invoked images and threat of terror groups such as ISIS in Syria and Iraq, Al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria, and moreover concern relating to spread of extremism among Finnish population or widely in the Europe and Western countries, fighters´ in and out movements across borders as well as increasing terror attacks in the European cities. The latest discussions raise migration policies under scanning as the sternest critique might suggest that the policies have failed to do their job and more tightened measures such as sealing off borders are needed to avoid spread of terrorism. In Finland, most often, the focus of public discussions seems to direct on inadaptability, isolation and exploitation of Finnish welfare services by the refugees and asylum seekers rather than careful analysis of cultural, social, political and economic determinants, the root-causes of forced migration and its impacts. This is an actual and important discussion that I have attempted to take part in with my thesis. Forced migration is growing as a result of disasters and conflicts, thus, it cannot be undermined as a continuing and increasing process and, moreover, as an important human rights obligation for the international community, including Finland.

Social work is dealing with the impacts of forced migration processes and integration policies. Social workers in Finland are confronting refugee experiences and questions of resources in a relation to Finland as a receiving country as well as to refugee families and community. As I have suggested with my study, the role of identity and culture in social work seems to be particularly significant, especially at times of fragmented social, political and economic spheres in life. Refugee families may have gone through sever psychological and physical losses, experiences of displacement and discrimination as well as disruption of social networks and cultural affiliation. By the insights drawn from social work in Shatila, I believe the question for social work in Finland to be ask is that how much efforts are orientated on cultural values in families, belief systems, kinship and other social networks locally and transnationally, to encourage sense of belonging home away from home and adaptation to a new culture in order to avert feelings of isolation. My thesis also reminds that

experiences of war or disasters and displacement, becoming a refugee and trying to maintaining daily routines, family wellbeing and income shape gender relations, and how gender identities and roles are constructed within social work practice in the receiving country. Secondly, sustaining either concrete or spiritual ties to homeland might contribute to adaption and resilience in the new culture and environment. Social workers practicing with refugees operate within certain legal, policy and resource context shaping the practice tasks, especially towards service guidance and material resource distribution, yet, more culture sensitive, customer orientated and political approaches might be the key for social change and development ─ the kind of practical responses that consciously acknowledge identity in a relation to society and different cultures and, moreover, social work role in constructing these identities.

As a matter of fact, social work professionalism could better be discussed in terms of cultural meanings, experience-based knowledge and shared expertise, without of course neglecting science and education in social work. This, however, could mean that the ideology in Finnish social work should adapt to such that notices diversity, difference and power, and engages in community-based practices, open expertise, advocacy and critical political discussions locally and globally. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see if similar approaches that I observed in Shatila could be incorporated in social work practice with refugees in Finland such as community-based facilitated programs involving national agencies and refugee associations that tackle identity sources; memories and origins, ethnic heritage and religion which could further strengthen social support and generate sense of hope, renewal and adaption to a new society. Mobilizing material resources, employment and education are all important strategies for integration but, perhaps, identity resources have been left with lesser notice in integration policies. The focus on identity does not have to mean perspectives that are separating but rather dialogical, bridging caps, creating open discussions between different cultures and religions, moreover, releasing threat images and juxtapositions. I believe the postmodern discussions about culture and identity, first and foremost, encourages social work practice, values and research to respond questions relating to multiculturalism and diversity in Finland especially now, at times of increasing forced migration and global insecurity.

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Appendix 1: Thematic interview questions

Social workers´ interviews:

1. How and why did you start to work with BAS, what was your motivation?
2. What motivates you every day?
3. What are the most rewarding and most difficult aspects in your work?
4. What is your relationship with other social workers?
5. How is it to built a relationship with the family?
6. What cases are the most challenging? Could you describe a case that has stayed in your mind?
7. When did you feel you succeeded in your work?
8. How has the family situations changed since the early days of your work?
9. What are the main issues in the community?
10. How has the camp life changed from the beginning of your work?
11. What kind of work/help is needed more in Shatila?
12. What do you think about the current security situation in Lebanon?
13. What does it mean for you to be a Palestinian?

Mothers' interviews:

1. How was your family situation before reaching over to BAS? How did you hear about BAS?
2. What are the main concerns of your family currently?
3. Do you feel your situation has changed? In which ways?
4. Can you give me some examples how the social worker has helped you?
5. How would you describe your relationship with the social worker?
6. How would you describe your relationship with your social worker?
7. What do you think about the activities? What do you think is the activity that has benefited you the most?
8. How is it to life in the Shatila refugee camp? Do you feel safe? Has the life changed in the community?
9. Is the Syrian war impacting your family life? In which ways?
10. What makes you happy?

Children's interviews:

1. In which school are you in? How is the school going?
2. Who belong to your family? How is your relationship with your family members?
3. Could you describe your typical day?
4. What do you like to do on your free time?
5. What do you think about Shatila? Do you feel safe?
6. Do you know about Palestine? Do you talk about Palestine in your family?
7. What do you think about your social worker and the activities in the center? What is your favorite activity?
8. Do you have any worries in your life? What would you like to change in your life?
9. What are your dreams for the future?